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Chapter 10

Reputation Focused Ethics: The Community-Reflective Frame

The Community-Reflective ethical framework focuses on the virtues that a community believes should be cultivated by a “good” person, a person’s character. An integral branch of the teleological tradition, this lens brings us back full circle...or perhaps a spiral...to the teachings of Aristotle and St Thomas Aquinas who emphasized becoming a person of good character as one lived out his role in the community. Part of the teleological tradition, virtue ethics embraces our whole life, our destiny which leads us to our death. However, this tradition distinguishes itself by focusing first on moral agents and their lives. The tradition doesn’t dictate specific actions, as seen with Kant and rights/responsibility focused ethics (individual-reflective lens) or specific goals as emphasized with Mill and results focused ethics (individual-action lens). Because we ask what kind of person we want to be, what we want our
character to be, and how we want others to see us – our reputation, this lens invites the ethical agent to determine for herself what human qualities are important. Clearly as we determine what virtues we will embrace, certain obligations follow and goals will be chosen. The question is what process comes first: examining the character from which the action flows or choosing actions which then determine character.

Virtue ethics, or character ethics, often focuses on the key qualities which are required for us to fulfill our obligations in the community. Given that we are born into a community and take on certain responsibilities, we naturally strive to develop the virtues which are required by our various roles. The tension in defining ourselves by our roles is assuring that we can meet the requirements of excellence without becoming ultimately defined by our roles rather than by who we are as a person.

This balance is delicate because who we are is shaped profoundly by the roles we assume. None of us has an unrestrained choice in the matter. Some are limited because of perceived constraints or opportunities created by gender or nationality. Our access to resources and opportunities makes a difference. Finally, we are influenced by our own personal dreams, preferences, and choices. At the height of a career, a person who is trained in the law but teaches is different than that same person would have been had she chosen a life in the courtroom. Thus, as we choose roles and modify our actions based on the response of ourselves and others, we attend to our character and our reputation. The community/reflective lens invites us to consider both our own sense of who we are and how we are viewed by others rather than only our accomplishments.

Working from the central concept of ethics as attending to the development of our character, the community-reflective lens invites of us determine for ourselves what kind of a person we want to be and how we are seen by others. The conversation centers on how we defines ourselves and the expectations that the community has for a “good” person. Essential to this process is that we see our self as a moral person and strive to meet the
criteria of ethical behavior that is both self-imposed and expected by the community. This tradition reflects the essential optimism of the teleological tradition which says that as people are placed in community they will respond to love and acceptance by becoming good people. We also need to hone our reflective skills to become emotionally mature and flexible. A person who is comfortable with her place in the community manages herself while understanding and empathizing with others.

**Characteristics of the Reputation Based Theories**

*(Community/Reflective Lens)*

**Definition:** An act is ethical if it is a virtuous act, consistent with the habitual development of sound character traits including habits of thoughtful reflection, good intentions, and noble human virtues.

A moral person is one who makes decisions or judgments based on his conscience, an internal sense of oughtness about how he should live or what he must do, and his core beliefs. A core belief is a notion or idea that is held with affection which results in passion or action. A core belief is marked by commitment that defines oneself and has the potential to energize and transform the self and community.

**Questions for determining right action:**

- What are the qualities that a good human being should have?
- What respected human qualities are demonstrated by this decision (courage, moderation, justice, etc.)?
How does this decision demonstrate the qualities that a person who is respected in this role has (competence, loyalty, diligence, fairness, etc.)?

How does this decision demonstrate the qualities of a person in this profession (e.g., commitment to public service, self-regulation, trust, integrity)?

Values which flow from these theories:

- **Integrity**: A person should develop habits of truthfulness.

- **Justice**: A person should seek to do that which will promote the fair treatment of people in terms of compensation for work done or contribution to the community. A just person also assures that the resources of the group, both opportunities and assets are distributed fairly.

- **Courage**: A person should embrace the opportunity to demonstrate the highest qualities of the individual or professional even if others choose another path.

- **Civility**: A person should always behave in a way which respects the inherent dignity of people and encourages their development as persons.

Nuances of theories of morality.

We become a moral person as we develop an “internal sense of “oughtness” that is the result of a life history that incorporates “who we are, who we are becoming, and who we desire to be” in light of the virtues and a healthy conscience. Further, we becomes a moral person as we develop self-awareness (emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence) as well as self-management, demonstrating and emotional self-control and exercise of core virtues, such as transparency, adaptability, and optimism.
The crucible of spirituality

In the popular movie Romancing the Stone, in one scene the novelist who is trying to rescue her sister is stranded with an ex-pat American who is following his dream. He describes his passion, a sailboat. As he goes on about his life in Columbia, the she says to him, “That sounds lonely, Jack T. Colton.” As we follow our individual dreams, we find that we are back where we started – in community. In America in particular, with our mobility and our busyness it becomes very easy to become lonesome because we have not been willing to put the time and energy into being part of a community, rather we strive to get it all for ourselves.

As we see ourselves as part of the larger whole, realizing that we don’t have to do it all and that there is plenty of work for everyone, we realize that we can be gentle with ourselves and savor the joy of working with others. This text began with Cain’s question to God, “Am I my brother’s keeper.” It turns out that to thrive as a person in community, we need to see each other as our neighbor and our friends.

In a business world where we cut our teeth on competitiveness, seeing each other as neighbor may seem far fetched. However, we can have healthy competition at the same time that we recognize that we are profoundly connected and that, at the core, no-one is “more special” than anyone else. With this realization, we can give up our fear of failure and settle into enjoying the work we have been given to do.

Using the Reputation Template

While many contemporary writers write about virtue ethics, Alisdair MacIntyre in After Virtue is a paradigmatic philosopher in this tradition. MacIntyre describes the history of this ethical tradition as well as provides a contemporary process which guides us in the conversation about what is a virtuous person. Evaluating an ethical option using MacIntyre’s process requires a conversation between the ethical agent and the community.
After looking at the strands of history which explored both deontology and teleology (including consequentialism), MacIntyre asserts that the way out of the ethical relativism, which emerged as the Enlightenment project failed and the foundations which were sought by the modern philosophers proved illusive, is to have people develop a sound character by embracing the core values of humanity. This action is not done in isolation: we each do not get to decide for ourselves the shape of our role in the community nor the exercise of the virtues. Rather, we shape our understanding of our roles and expectations in community, each learning from the other. In conversation and dialogue we each determine how best we should live.

MacIntyre also states that those who are part of a particular practice are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the work. Because MacIntyre sees institutions as potentially corrupting, those of us in a particular profession must work together to assure that the virtues are embodied and celebrated in our political and economic life. The integrity of any particular profession depends on individuals to maintain and demand excellence rather than succumbing to the subtle pressures of expediency. Thus, a primary value of this lens is that it mitigates against any of us basing decisions solely on the bottom line, doing whatever is required to reach the goals which are desired. Rather as we seek the goals of life, we are invited to consider what a “good person” in our role would do and seek excellence rather than mere expediency.

At the end of the process, each of us will be asked to explain why a particular option was chosen and why others were not. To accomplish this task with integrity, the same general template will be used as with the other ethical lenses, but the ethical content will come from MacIntyre and others in the virtue ethics tradition. Again, the more we practice, the greater the skill, and the easier the analysis. As we practice, we will learn to balance between what we believe are the marks of a “good” person and the expectations of the community while honoring our own personality. As we “exercise our conscience” and strive to be the best that we can be, our reputation for excellence will be enhanced. However, even when we believe that our
character is sterling and our reputation is stellar, the process assists us in correcting for personal bias and self-delusion.

**Step 1: Be Attentive**

A. **Identify the ethical actor.**

For this analysis the role of the agent is key – what are the qualities that we expect a person in this role to demonstrate. Working this assignment helps us examine our core ethical values in light of the core virtues which should be cultivated by persons in community. One of the key questions each of us must eventually confront is what kind of a person we are: what exactly is our character and our reputation in the community. Because none of us likes to think badly about ourselves, learning to seek and hear the unvarnished truth can be difficult – but enlightening. The truth may even save a career.

B. **Determine the Stakeholders**

As the conversation evolves between us, the ethical agent and the constituents who are impacted by our decision, we will also need to consider what our constituents expect of a “good” ethical actor in this situation. Thus, as you list the constituents, include a description of the competencies that the constituents expect the *ethical agent* to bring to the table. In framing this conversation, remember that the
constituents don’t always expect to be happy but they do expect the agent to act within the constraints of the role. Thus, if a good teacher is fair and impartial, a student will understand getting a low grade for a paper that is inferior in quality.

C. Attend to the Context and Assumptions.

MacIntyre asserts that three conversations inform the context of an ethical decision. The first is the practice in which we engage. That concept will be developed later. The second is what MacIntyre calls the “narrative order of a single human life.” One of the gifts of feminist and postmodern scholarship is the notion that each of us has the ability to construct for ourselves a life based on the “stories” that we tell about ourselves. Mary Catherine Bateson opened the door in Composing a Life by noticing that each of us not only have different seasons of our lives but also define who we are by the way we talk about our life. To see what is important, listen to the strands of conversation when you tell people about yourself. As we begin to look at an ethical problem, we must attend to our own narrative as an ethical agent as well as the narrative of the people and companies with whom we are working.

Listening to the stories, the narratives, people tell about themselves is fascinating. One person may come from a family of strong-minded women, just ask. This family believes that being fiercely independent, economically independent and a bit “uppity” are marks of strong, fine women. Thus, she may highlight in her narrative those times when she went against convention, was able to move with ease in a “man’s world,” and took care of herself. Another person may come from a family which values civic service and see himself as “pulling himself up by the bootstraps.” He may spin a story about how he walks in the steps of the men in his family who toughed it out on the prairie, were “pillars of the community” as they served on school boards, and were successful in business.

Organizations also have a narrative, a story about the characteristics and
virtues which are important to them and the values which they hold dear. Often the personality of the founder forms the central story of the organization. One example is seen in the book *Pour Your Heart Into It* by Howard Shultz, founder and CEO of Starbucks. The chapters lay out his corporate philosophy. One telling story underscores why the company provides for health care for all employees who work 10 hours a week or more. Shultz remembers when his father was injured on the job, had no health care, and the family almost did not make it. Shultz vowed that if he got the opportunity, no one who worked for him would ever be in that situation. This story is often part of the narrative told for employee orientation as one joins the “Starbucks family.”

MacIntyre states that the third stage is the moral tradition in which we place our self. Each of the ethical lenses come from a moral tradition which purports to assist us in knowing what is right action. The lenses distill several thousand years of conversation as people consider the nature of human persons, the goals for the community, and how we should best live in community. While the lenses give us an opportunity to sample different ways of looking at problems, each of us at some point has the opportunity to embrace one of the traditions and be shaped by that tradition.

Thus, if the quest for justice is important, we may choose to be formed by traditions that are informed by teachings on economic and social justice. If we find a particular religious tradition meaningful, we will steep ourselves in those thoughts and practices as we learn to be a good person. While no one path is the only way, people who seeks ethical and moral maturity often find that they need to go deep into one tradition and have their heart and minds transformed in the crucible of a particular set of beliefs and practices.

*Step 2: Be Intelligent*

A. *Pinpoint the Issue:*

What is the central problem to be resolved? As we shape the issue into
Issue:
Given that the state requires that health care providers report all persons who test positive for HIV to a central registry, should we tell people before we do the blood work that a positive test result will be reported to the health department?

B. Values in Conflict:

Values in conflict:
The two values in conflict are autonomy and predictability or safety. Patients have been told that their relationship with the doctor is confidential, thus we want to assure that we maintain the privacy of our patients. The patient-physician privilege is important to the medical profession to assure that the physician gets full information prior to beginning treatment. On the other hand we want to assure that a highly infectious disease does not spread further. Our commitment to the community requires that we do all we can to minimize the spread of disease.

As we explore the values in conflict, virtue ethics highlights three different arenas of difficulty. The first is a conflict in expectations of the role itself. Different people may have different expectations for a person in this role and thus we must clarify what exactly a person in this role should do. The second is a conflict between excellence and expedience: often we are called to do that which is expedient, which will get a result quickly or with the greatest return, even if the virtues of the ethical agent or the organization are compromised. This lens calls us to focus on excellence. The third problem may be a conflict between the role expectations and our vision of our self as a “good” person, or a “good” member of the larger community. Virtue theorists remind us that at the end of the day, who we are as a total person is what matters.

C. Identify options for action

Again, we must act, even in
the face of difficulty and lack of clarity about the outcomes. Again, thinking critically and creatively assists in this process.

Step 3: Be Reasonable

A. Hone critical thinking skills.

MacIntyre gives an elegant process for determining the characteristics which mark an ethical person. He begins by having us define our “practice” which is

...any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended. (Emphasis added)\(^1\)

The first integral concept is that a “practice” is coherent and complex. To illustrate, MacIntyre distinguishes between tic-tac-toe, which is easy to learn and has little strategy, and chess, which is complex with many rules. An individual event – teaching a class – is not a practice. However, the discipline of learning how to be a “teacher” and embracing the qualities of “teacher” would be a practice. So, we must distinguish between doing something sporadically and plunging into the practice to learn the rules and master the skills that mark a true professional in this area.

As each of us looks at our professions, we must seek the macro-definition, the big picture of who we are and what we do. Each one of us has times where we fail as we strive to do better. Because our practices are complex, we can always improve. Thus, we never really completely master a practice; we just continue to get better as we intentionally hone the skills which are the hallmarks of the practice. Rather than getting caught in the micro-minutiae of daily living, we must always keep our eye on the ultimate goal,
a life which has meaning and purpose which is lived out within the context of our roles.

The second integral characteristic is that a “practice” is socially established and cooperative. All theorists in this tradition emphasize that we alone cannot determine the qualities that mark a “good” person in a particular role. Rather, our practice is continually nuanced in the lived conversation among members of the community. We also have multiple practices – parent, child, employee, citizen. Thus, a source of reflection is seeing when the requirements of one practice conflict with the requirements of another. A perennial problem for many of us is balancing the demands of our work against the demands of our families.

Through dialogue and experience the definition of our practices are refined. The expectations that we and others have concerning the obligations and characteristics of our practice become more clear. From time to time we find that we cannot live within the constraints expected of a us in a particular role. At that moment, we must be willing to challenge the parameters of the role (such as a woman demanding to be able to go to law school) or find another role. Even rebellion is a conversation with a community.

B. Apply the ethical content.

When the meaning of that incredibly complex sentence is (in the words of the philosophers) unpacked, we see a set of basic steps which help us to determine proper ethical action. The conversation always begins with the ethical agent who determines the shape of the practice as historically given.

1. Determine components of the practice, as defined by the ethical agent.
MacIntyre invites us to determine the core competencies of the practice in light of four elements: (1) the standards of excellence, (2) rules, (3) internal goods and (4) external goods which define and partially constitute the practice. Many ethicists assert that our primary ethical obligation is to be competent – to meet the threshold requirements of our work. Thus, the criteria developed by MacIntyre can help us determine competence in our practice. We come into roles which have been previously established and designed by the community. We then add our own proficiencies and expertise. Thus, in conversation and community, the ethical agent and constituents shape the practice.

a. *Standards of Excellence*: what are the standards of excellence which mark the practice of the ethical agent. As we evaluate the standards of excellence, we must look to other practitioners in the field to see the benchmarks. MacIntyre invites us to look at two faces of excellence, the excellence of the finished product and the excellence of the performance in creating that product.

The conversation about excellence of a product can be related to the current trend to identify best practices and standards in our field. As we adopt strategies of continuous improvement, we are part of a conversation for excellence. For example, the bar has been raised for professional presentations by the emergence of technology and “power-point” presentations. Through graphics, presentations can be much clearer than those which are just spoken or rely on earlier forms of technology, such an overhead projector. If we choose not to use the technology, our oral presentation must be even more compelling than ordinarily required to meet the new community standards.
Excellence of performance can be seen in the quality of research, the care with which a presentation is constructed. We want to avoid having a beautiful, technology enhanced presentation that has no content. Skilled presenters know that many times they must do a great deal more research to get the “background” information than they can ever present. A test of excellence both for teachers and students is how many questions can be fielded before they get to the end of knowledge.

b. Rules of the practice:
what are the rules which we must follow? The first kind of rules are those which define the practice. For example, one who plays the blues uses a certain set of scales and rhythms which are different than those of Mozart’s concertos. The second kind of rules limit the practice such as codes of ethics, professional codes, or laws. Sometimes we want to challenge the professional codes or the law because they are (arguably) unjust. If the option requires civil disobedience, going against these rules, we need to count the cost and assure that we are responding to a higher or more complete understanding of ethical behavior. Often what poses as civil disobedience is a just person trying to play the edge and not get caught.

Every practice has inherent rules as well as external rules. Building on the example of public speaking, a “good” presentation has a coherent outline, sufficient examples to illustrate the points, and good supporting data. As people learn the rules of the practice of public speaking, they master skills such as pacing, voice quality, and organization. A presentation may also be subject to external rules – length of time, appropriate content, depth of research. Those who choose to flaunt the external rules often have to be

Rules of practice
1. A Health care provider must first of all assure that the standards of good medicine are met, which includes both contractual agreements and implied cultural agreements. In this context, full informed consent before any procedure is part of the expectation of the community.

2. The provider is accountable to the state, who licenses and regulates the provider as well as to the physicians and other professionals who must maintain their licenses to practice.
very, very good in order to get past the expectations of the audience and the gatekeepers of the practice.

c. Internal Goods: what are the internal goods – satisfaction, feeling of a job well done, ability to make a difference – which are important to us in this situation? A person who is not skilled at public speaking who actually gets through the presentation will feel very good about her accomplishment, regardless of the opinion of others. We each have areas where we are stretching to become better as we perfect our practice. Noticing where we are on the “leading edge” of one’s own practice helps us define our personal trajectory of excellence. Often, our choices may not be well understood as we decide to forge our own path rather than take a popular one.

d. External Goods: what are the external goods – title, prestige, financial rewards – which are important and need to be sought and protected? Those who excel at a practice are in demand. Those who are very good can command a high price and get status. Each of us has to carefully critique our own talents and abilities to determine what will bring sufficient external goods so that we can support ourselves.

People always ask whether these excellence can be taught. Experience seems
to indicate that one who has a modicum of talent can become a good “B+” practitioner but may not be able to bridge the gap to become a good “A” practitioner. However, even if one is a good “A” practitioner, with practice and work, one can become an “A+.” Clearly, we all have different talents and gifts which we can hone and honor.

2. Determine the expectations of each member of the community has as to the competencies of the ethical agent.

For this stage, we join in conversation with others to ascertain whether our determination of the core competencies match those held by other members of the community, particularly those who are acknowledged as masters in the field. To complete this phase, we consider the expectations that each constituent has for a competent ethical agent. In determining what makes a “good” person in this role, we need not focus on what makes us happy but what kind of person we want to become. A “good” teacher is fair and demanding, stretching the mind of students. Sometimes students are annoyed by the challenge and may believe that they would be happier in a class that is not as hard. However, often those teachers who give “soft” classes are also not seen as “good” in their profession.

At this point, we can make a preliminary determination as to the proper ethical action. As we review our choices, we evaluate the options against our
own stated competencies and standards. If the option does not meet our own threshold expectations of competency, then the option is not ethical.

The next step is to assure that we have considered the concerns of the constituents. Remember that the constituents don’t get to veto the option. The goal is to assure that the competencies as we have defined them and the considered opinion of the constituents are met. This is where a conversation about the requirements of the practice might help. As we talk with others to define excellence in a role, we can both sharpen (and perhaps raise the bar) for our own sense of what a good person does as well as clarify the expectations of others. Only options which meet the core requirements of the practice are considered in the next three steps.

3. Evaluate each option which meets the requirements of the competencies against the core virtues: (a) integrity; (b) courage; (c) justice and (d) civility. Include a working definition of the content of those virtues so that points of agreement and disagreement can be determined.

Once an act meets the requirements of the core competencies, it is judged against the virtues. MacIntyre chooses the core virtues of courage, honesty, and justice. However, he does not claim that his list is exclusive. A critique of MacIntyre is (1) that he has a limited list of virtues and (2) he doesn’t describe the ethical content of the virtues, for example, telling us what constitutes a life of integrity. As we consider the virtues, we can add those which we believe are important to the analysis. Each situation may call
for a different constellation of virtues. Further, we can draw upon the wisdom and learning of the other theorists as we determine the content of the virtues, what behaviors and considerations go into assessing the virtues.

### Evaluation against the virtues:

1. The option of telling the patient that if he tests positive for HIV, his name will be reported to the state demonstrates integrity in that the patients are treated honestly and given the information which they need to make good decisions.

2. The option also demonstrates courage in that the physicians have to trust the patients to make the right choice, to be willing to risk notoriety in order to be treated. If the physician treats the patient with grace, then the patient will be able to face this difficult prospect.

3. This option also supports justice in that the least advantaged, the patient is considered first, but the community is also honored in that the physician will work to minimize the spread of the disease.

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b. **Integrity:** For example, in exploring integrity, the individual/reflective lens might be useful in helping us remember what commitments we have with others. Attending to integrity will also help us remember to treat each person with dignity, as a human being who is entitled to be treated as an equal. The community/action lens may help us remember to step back from the situation and ask what information we would want if we didn't know who we were in a particular situation. We can borrow the “veil of ignorance” concept from Rawls to help us focus on what is essential for a well functioning system and move away from only considering our little part in the puzzle.

b. **Courage:** The next virtue on MacIntyre’s list is courage. He states that courage is the “capacity to risk harm or danger to oneself. This virtue has a role in human life because of its connection with care and concern.” In today’s business climate, courage is required not only for individual acts but also to hold those who are responsible for our institutions accountable. Whistleblowing is perhaps the ultimate act of courage. Even after being extolled in the press for extraordinary courage, those who hold their leaders accountable often find that they are unemployed and blackballed.
c. Justice: Justice is a more complex conversation. At its core, justice is the study of appropriate relationships in the community. The question becomes how one looks at the right treatment of people, the right use of property, and the proper exercise of power. Different ethical traditions have varying understandings of the way that individuals and the community should use of power and property.

However, a traditional way of organizing the themes of justice may be useful. Four categories of justice help us understand the conversation.

- **Contributive Justice**: how do we assure that people get a measure of the goods and services in the community based on what they have contributed. People who take very high risks and have high exposure in the community tend to get more financial reward than those who live more conservatives lives.

- **Retributive Justice**: This conversation assures that people are appropriately punished for violating the rules of the community. Paul Tillich, a contemporary theologian, asserts that if we err too far on the side of mercy, not holding people accountable for their actions, we in fact keep them as children and deny them the opportunity to be an adult responsible for one’s self – the greatest gift we have in this life.¹³ Thus, in the business community we have to assure that people who engage in fraud, theft, and dishonesty are held appropriately accountable for the effects their actions have upon our economic life.

- **Distributive Justice**: The process of determining who should get what goods and services in the community forms the content of the conversation about distributive justice. One problem is that we have different criteria for distribution of goods based on what goods are being distributed.¹⁴ The primary categories are *merit*, what we earn through our work and effort, *need*, the threshold necessities such as food, housing, and education, which we deserve because we are part of a community, and *market*, what we can buy because we have the
resources In conversation, members of the community make decisions about who gets what and how those goods should be distributed.

- **Restorative Justice.** An emerging conversation about justice invites us to consider how we restore community when someone has violated our trust. Begun as a way to help juveniles who had engaged in petty crime see that their acts impacted people’s lives, the whole conversation about restorative justice has merit for businesses.

**Core Justice Frameworks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reputation Based Theories (Virtue Theories)</th>
<th>Relationship Based Theories (Justice/Systems Theories)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A just act is where I honor and respect the choices of others.</td>
<td>A just act is where the community limits power so individuals can flourish.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rights Based Theories (Deontological Theories)</th>
<th>Results Based Theories (Teleological Theories)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A just act is where I only claim rights I’m willing to grant to others.</td>
<td>A just act is where I limit my choices for the well being of all.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each lens has a different slant on what is considered a just act. Because the claim of members of the community is so strong, each theory has addressed the various components of justice as the use of power and impact of influence profoundly shapes our choices. In each case, the claim of justice requires that we subordinate our interests to those of the “other,” people who also lay claim to an opportunity for the good life.

Many businesses find that they want to give back to their communities, subordinating their financial interests to build the common good. Employees volunteer to help in myriads of ways and companies support the efforts. By
actually working with others in the community, the people who otherwise would be faceless statistics become real human beings with lives and dreams. As we work with the people whose lives our business decisions impact we become aware of the ripple effect that our decisions have in our communities.

4. For each option which meets the requirements of the virtues, determine which one will best support the actor’s requirements of unity of life.

After an act is judged against the virtues, it is measured against our “unity of life,” that which gives meaning and purpose to our life and supports us becoming a moral person rather than one who does a series of ethical acts.

As we rank the options from the most preferred to least preferred, we get to remember that this act is the ultimate “newspaper” test – would we want this decision on the front page of the local news. As we consider the end of life, it is helpful to focus on what we want be, do and have. Each of us have certain virtues we want to cultivate. We have certain things that we want to do. We also have goals we want to achieve, which may include staying in business. As each of us strives to find meaning in life, we also shape our own life’s story. A useful exercise might be to consider what we would want written in the company’s annual report or what the comments at our retirement party would reflect. The unity of life requires that we see our lives as a whole, not just as a set of separate, unconnected actions.

C. Apply the moral content.

Evaluation against the unity of life:
1. The option of telling the patient that if he tests positive for HIV, his name will be reported to the state will assure that the PPO stays in business in that all of the agreements with the core constituencies will be met.
2. By exercising the virtues, the PPO will also enhance its reputation in the community and thus be known as a place which provides excellent service.
3. This option also allows the PPO to assure that both individuals and the community are served, that their interests are balanced so that each person is treated with grace and dignity.
The moral lens demands that we carefully assess not only our intellectual strengths but also our emotional health. Thus, the final step is determining which of the remaining options best meets the requirements of our conscience and our core beliefs. A core belief is a notion or idea that is held with affection which results in passion or action. Actions which are consonant with our core beliefs are marked by a commitment that define ourselves and have the potential to energize and transform both us and the community.

MacIntyre asserts that as we begin cultivating the core virtues, we will be able to shape an ethical life for ourselves. His final provisional definition of a virtue is

“those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will also sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good, by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter, and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the good.”

While this definition begins to move us from the notion of ethics as a set of actions to a person who has the habits of thought and action of a moral person, MacIntyre doesn’t ever directly address the issue of emotions and the human spirit. However, many other authors are exploring the role of emotions and the life of the spirit in the shaping of the human person. To provide a perspective on this facet of our lives, we turn to the work of Charles Shelton, a psychologist and theologian who studies the content and formation of conscience. In exploring our conscience, Shelton begins with a core teleological assumption that we as humans strive to be “good” in the roles we embrace.

Like MacIntyre, Shelton finds that each of us must take responsibility for placing ourselves in a “life history,” or “narrative,” which shapes and give meaning to our life. As we determine how we fit into the history of our
particular world and the meaning of our lives, Shelton asserts that we need to explore who we are, who we are becoming, and who we desire to be. One useful tool may be to examine the elements which shape our conscience. Shelton poses these questions to help us become a “good” person.16

- How does this option support our moral beliefs and commitments;
- How does this option support our own notions of self-respect, respect for others and a realistic look at who we are and others.
- How does this option support our ideals, our moral vision and hope for the community.
- How does this option assure that we do not think of ourselves as better than we are or appropriate for ourselves prerogatives which we should not have.
- How does this option meet the criteria of empathy, compassion and love.
- How does this option mitigate against our personal defenses which allow us to cope in this world and function.
- How does this option support the our emotional health and acknowledge the complexity of our lives.

Our sense of who we are as a business person absolutely determines how we will behave in our work community. A person who is disgruntled and sees
herself exploited by their employer will behave very differently than one who see himself as an integral part of the community. The ability to correctly assess our skills and talents, our strengths and weaknesses is critical for identifying who we are.

“Who we are becoming” is decided by the myriad of choices we make. A person who chooses to go to law school and practice law becomes a very different person than if she chooses to get a Ph.D. in English and specialize in Dickens. Each of our career choices as well as the way we choose to deal with our choices shapes us as a person and contributes to the narrative of our life.

“Who we desire to be” is an essential component of our life story. Our mentors, our guides, our heroes help to determine the trajectory of our lives. As we begin to see possibilities for our futures and choose not only actions but habits of thought and being, we can participate in our own transformation. For example, Shelton asserts that those who cultivate habits of gratitude are healthier and happier than those who see the world through a dark, misty fog of resentment.

Daniel Goleman in Primal Leadership asserts that one must have both self-awareness, knowledge of one’s emotions, as well as one’s reason, and self-management, where one is able to keep disruptive emotions under control and display a full array of virtues in order to be an effective leader. As one tends to both the emotional and rational side of the person, one can be and become a virtuous person, a leader and mentor in the business community.

Step 4: Be Responsible

A. Rank the options from least preferred to most preferred.

Having determined the elements of the practice and then evaluated each options against the criteria of (1) the ethical actor’s understanding of the core competencies; (2) the constituents’ understanding of the core competencies;
(3) the virtues; (4) the ethical agent’s dreams for unity of life; and (5) the whisperings of conscience, rank the options from least preferred the most preferred. As the options are ranked, summarize why the ranking of options was made and demonstrate the primacy given to the virtues, the character of the ethical agent.

B. Correct for bias

While the community/reflective template – the reputation lens - allows us to cultivate our personal virtues within a coherent personal narrative while we are an integral part of the community, if we use this lens without the balance of other view points we can become self-righteous. As we cultivate the virtues, especially those of us who are privileged, we can somehow believe that we are entitled to the blessings of our life as we are not aware of the contributions that others have made which allow us to be who we are. A colleague once quipped about a politician who seemed blind to the needs of the less advantaged in the community while celebrating his own fortune, that “he was born on third base but thinks he hit a triple.”

As we work to become “all we can be,” we need to remember that we are special – just like everyone else. As we look at ourselves with clear eyes and engage with others with compassion and emotional maturity, we can avoid the hubris which comes from a sense of entitlement and unrealistic self-esteem.

C. Attend to the common good.

As many voices explore how we are going to fashion our new history, a new note is starting to be heard, the inclusion of the spiritual. Not tied exclusively to any particular religious tradition, members of the community invite us to question what Rosemary Haughton calls the “taken-for-granted separation between the material and spiritual, between physical and mental, [as] we struggle to express in that language the disintegrating conclusions of quantum physics, and “field” theory, in which there are no “things” at all,
but only relationship, information, movement.”

All of us who work in business need to confront is what our professional ethics will look like in a world not defined by individual action, facts, and stability, but by the fluid situation Haughton describes where our only lodestar is what we believe responsible human beings should do to build a community in which all can thrive. For many, our employers only want what William Lynch calls our “useful” self. We sense that “management” wants us to come to work, bring a skill set that will enhance the bottom line and guarantee the well-being and success of the organization. However, taking only our “useful” self to work denies whole segments of who we are as people and breed “passivity, submissiveness and dependence.” The emerging academic and popular inquiry into spirituality at work addresses the question of how we can take our whole selves to work and contribute to the life of the economic community.

For those of us living through these changing times, freedom comes from our ability to imagine what we would like to become and what we want our businesses to be, to deliberately choose a particular direction, and then work to make that dream a reality. To accomplish this move to personal action rather than merely responding to a determined world, we must be willing to take responsibility for ourselves and our community, including the community that manufactures goods and provides services, the world of business.

D. Choose to act

Draft the short statement that will be placed on the division bulletin board. Articulate the statement in such a way that the core questions of this lens are answered:

- What respected human qualities and virtues are demonstrated by this decision (courage, moderation, justice, etc.)?
How does this decision demonstrate the qualities and virtues that a person who is respected in this role has (competence, loyalty, diligence, fairness, etc.)?

How does this decision demonstrate the qualities of a person in this profession (e.g., commitment to public service, self-regulation, trust, integrity)?

Announcement:
The PPO will be implementing a protocol that assures that even for a routine procedure like drawing blood, full informed consent as to the possible consequences of drawing blood will be given, e.g., that if the person tests positive for HIV, their name will be placed on a central registry with the state. While this protocol will not affect many people and thus may be seen as an inconvenience, we want to assure that those who might be affected by the policy have full information and are treated with respect and dignity.

Step 5: Returning to Awareness

In this section discuss whether or not the ethical analysis made sense. Did you like the result? What were the problems with the process? What are the sticking points with the process? How did you see the process enhanced or modified by adding the world of emotion and conscience?

Continuing the Conversation

1. Using either the first problem in the simulation or another fact pattern, analyze the situation using the Individual/Reflective lens. Was the problem easy to do, indicating that this might by your preferred method of working ethical problems? Was the process difficult indicating that this may not be your ethical home?

2. Read an op-ed piece in your local paper or a national paper and find examples of deontological thinking. In what ways did the author appeal to the fairness of the reason for acting being a way that all people should be treated? In what way did the author appeal to treating people as they have agreed to be treated, the notions of contract?

3. In light of issues raised by this lens, reflect on ways that you attend to
imbalance, whether concerning power or in your personal and professional life. How do you know when you are improperly using your personal power? How do you know when your life is not in balance? What strategies do you have to bring your life back into balance?

Notes:

7. Shelton, 37-38.
8. MacIntyre, 187.
10. Shultz, *Pour Your Heart Into It: Building a Company One Cup at a Time*.
11. MacIntyre, 187.
12. MacIntyre, 192.
15. MacIntyre 219.