

**ETHICAL**

**EXPLORATIONS**

**MARVIN C. KATZ, PH. D.**

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# PREFACE

These pages contain the transcript of the proceedings of a fictional conference called to discuss Ethics. Picture this: in a large meeting hall with the chairs arranged in a circle we see assembled the regular conferees along with several new participants..

We recognize the regular discussants that we have heard from before in the first two parts of this expanding body of theor, accounting for relevant considerations in the field of Ethics, speakers such as Frank, George, Harry, and Kay. We have read their contributions in A Unified Theory of Ethics – which now constitutes Part One, a **PDF-file link to which is HERE:** <http://tinyurl.com/yzvojzu> and in Ethical Adventures – Part Two of the volume, a **PDF-file link is HERE:** <http://tinyurl.com/23eeqwd> (both essays are recommended as prerequisite reading for the argumentation they contain.) New participants have joined the forum as the circle gets wider. Although the characters are *imaginary*, what they say may reflect the views of real people.

The topics which the onference addresses in this Part Three are intended to supplement the Unified Theory - the new paradigm for ethics offered earlier. They help to fill out the picture. They serve the quest for a more complete theory as they respond to implicit questions which a reader may have had while studying the earlier two parts of the treatise.

Some of the topics which receive attention in this Part III are immorality, selfishness, corruption, free will, human nature, self-interest, happiness, criteria for a good theory of ethics, derived ethical principles; and the issue of whether ethics can be objective as well as subjective. Let's listen in as the discussion is already under way.

# ETHICAL EXPLORATIONS

## WHAT IS ETHICS?

**Mark:** It's been said before but it bears repeating: Ethics is a perspective on individuals that is distinctly different than the anatomical/physiological perspective; and different than the socio-economic perspective. The ethical perspective regards an individual as an Intrinsic Value. Various ethical fallacies (errors) are known as racism, sexism, rankism, genderism, ageism, and speciesism. To regard a person as a mere number (to be erased), or as a thing, are also ethical mistakes. A person is a precious treasure not to be defiled or violated. Abuse, slavery, and cruelty are unethical.

**Harry:** A main emphasis of Ethics is "morality" which we earlier defined as a relation of correspondence between "self" and "Self.". It is necessary not only to "walk the talk" but to be fussy what the "talk" is: When I say "talk" I refer to the self-sentences, that we tell ourselves - the "internal CD," the compact disc we play over and over. It means our basic beliefs. It alludes to my sense of personal identity, how I define myself, my sense of who I am. It is intangible. That is what the Unified Theory of Ethics means by "Self." As you recall, the "self" is our observable behavior, our actual physical self.

Once we straighten those out – the 'talk' and the congruence with the 'talk' – once we get clear about our values, and we come to see the importance of self-consistency (that is, avoiding hypocrisy, being congruent, being authentic rather than being a phony) ...then we will truly have a better world

and a better life. This is an objective matter, not just a matter of what "we like." [Sure, esthetics enters into it, but how much do we now know about the science of esthetics? One axiologist I know, using the mathematics of the Differential Calculus, actually ran tests measuring peoples' ratings of what they considered to be "beautiful." There was - it turned out - a larger consensus on beauty than what everyone expected there would be.]

**Jeb:** I agree with what you are both saying, Mark and Harry. I think the our most dangerous human tendency is perhaps to exclude from our sympathy, or have contempt for, those who do not share our ideology.

Stereotypes and prejudice are used to justify cruelty. We hear such rationalizations for cruelty as: "She is lazy and. Ignorant." "He is evil." He "doesn't believe in god." Or, "he does believe in god." "So and so is ugly." "She's too young." Or " She is too old. " This is pessimism; and judgmentalism.

As an ethicist I derive the conclusion that if one wants to maximize the value one gets from life such judgmentalism must be minimal. Also I warn against the danger of holding another human in contempt in the name of one or just a few alleged features. This is the very definition of *prejudice*, since a person is in actuality a cluster of uncountably-many features. Prejudice is an ethical mistake.

**Dan:** Hatred and envy are twin brothers. And if we emphasize a misguided belief that "human value is based on human accomplishment," we start treating the so -called "mediocre" as expendable. And what is '*mediocrity*' if not another abstraction from the reality which is a complex human individual? We must be careful not to Systemically-value people, but rather to Intrinsically-value them. We should indeed use our gifts to enrich one another, but these gifts should never obscure the greater gift, which is merely being alive and being aware.

Another point: we share this amazing planet; yet do we appreciate it?

**Jerry:** Richard Baron, Ph.D., a prominent British philosopher, tells us that “There is no reason to regard talk in terms of values as somehow inferior to talk in terms of scientific and other facts.”

**Harry:** This system of Ethics implies an imperative: Be true to your own true self. In order to do that you must first-of-all Know yourself! Then you Choose yourself; that is, you accept who you are, defects and all.

Then – to be yourself – you are to Create yourself! That is, you are to develop your talents, express yourself, **pursue your goals and projects**. Finally, to fully be true to yourself, it is necessary to Give yourself. That means you express your gifts publicly. Or you take on responsibility. You ‘give yourself away’ when you do this. You in effect say to the world, Here I am.

The beauty of all this is, as Baron explains<sup>1</sup>, “An ethic which says that it is good to pursue our projects is specific enough to favour values associated with the development of the individual, because individuals need to be allowed to devise and pursue their own projects. Correspondingly, the ethic is ***opposed to values that would justify the oppression of some people for the good of others, because the oppressed would not be able to pursue their own projects.***”  
(emphasis added)

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1) Richard Baron, Projects and Values: An Ethic for Today, (London: Authors-OnLine Books, 2006) [www.authorsonline.co.uk](http://www.authorsonline.co.uk)

## **DOES HUMAN NATURE CHANGE?**

**Carl:** Well, theory is fine, but practice is something else again. What I'd like to know is: Can human nature be changed?

**Frank:** That all depends upon what you mean by "human nature." The prevailing ethos of the times has changed through the years. In other words, there has been cultural evolution - which over time has had the effect of changing what was thought to be "human nature."

See pages 27-31 in Ethical Adventures where moral evolution is discussed and a value-analysis of the concept was presented: <http://tinyurl.com/23eeqwd>

Every time a psychotherapist, or a life-coach, counsels a client successfully, and a change in behavior is evident in that individual, in a sense, human nature can be said to have changed. Every time someone learns something new in a school or outside of one, that person has changed to a degree.

**Deb:** True. A good case can be made that the reasons why you do things, the values you have and live by, **are your nature**.

Yet as a result of education people do change their belief systems, as well as their value systems: they value different things, and they value differently than they did years ago. In that sense "human nature" is changed every day that real education takes place.

For every day different people gain new insights and hence

change their behavior accordingly. They have *learned* something new.

**Jack:** I agree. It is obvious that people are born with talents, predispositions, characteristics, inclinations, and all kinds of other attributes. Some are excellent at music, others at sports. There are greater and lesser degrees of intelligence. Education and **opportunity** play a crucial role.

**John:** Matt Ridley believes that human beings are inherently ambitious and that they have high expectations. He argues that we need each other to make any kind of progress, and that sharing ideas is the way to solve problems. It's the way to go. {See listing in Bibliography.}

**Ed:** We are aware that one can reason at a principled level and still remain immoral in behavior. The principles of Ethics ideally shall be applicable to all intelligent, conscious beings. And those principles ought to transcend any particular relative situation or culture. In that sense, they are universal.

**Jerry:** Many people today already have figured out that the concept "Might makes right" is in and of itself an immoral means of adjudicating virtually anything, and certainly not morals or rights. Just because, in 1940, Hitler had might that certainly did not make him right. He was deranged, and even so he was voted into power by under-informed voters – or by the apathy of those who stayed home and didn't vote at all. [Now I am straying into Political Science, which is a field very close to Social Ethics, but not necessarily the same.] My point is that *might* does not make right since it violates the definition of Ethics which is that every individual is to be **I**ntrinsically valued, (*abbreviated* as: **I**-valued.)

**Keith:** Regardless of our intentions, the consequences of our actions themselves have consequences. Let's take something as simple as lying. Maybe the only bad thing that happens from lying is a loss of trust. That loss of trust puts people on the defensive; and enough distrust and defensiveness results in a society that is very unpleasant to live in.

To have a culture that lacks respect, lacks protection of the dignity of others, lacks integrity, puts capital gain above all moral considerations, results in a very unpleasant reality, A culture without respect for, and honoring of, the dignity of the individual can result - in the minds of some - even in their being ready to "justify holy wars."

**Ida:** You're right, Keith. **Respect is basic**, and it follows from I-value. When we I-value individuals we will at a minimum show respect.

**Bill:** I would respond to Carl's question, about whether human nature can be changed, this way: genetic engineering has promise to result in changes in what was previously taken to be human nature.

**Jeb:** However the question itself is vague .If I overcome 'a natural desire,' am I overcoming my nature or is it **my nature** to overcome my natural desires?

**Enrico:** The question "Can human nature change?" begs the question: Is there a *Nature* which can be changed? And this is not clear. Allow me to explain.

Modern-day genetic biologists firmly believe that Darwin has already effectively shown that searching for a “*true* definition or fixed nature” of a given *species* is not only futile but absolutely unnecessary, since the definition of a species is always-already something temporary, something which changes, something without any permanent lasting or stable reality.

Which philosophical wise man do you want to listen to? Is our nature essentially libido-maximizing machines as Freud asserted, or are we rational beings a la Descartes? Aristotle tells us we are social creatures. Marx would insist we are driven mainly by economic motives. Or is our nature a will to power a la Nietzsche; or a will to meaning a la Victor Frankl? [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor\\_Frankl](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor_Frankl) Do we accept **those** natures? Or do we accept the natures attributed to us by Marcuse, Foucault, Weber, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Mill, etc ? Or do we finally select those with which we feel most comfortable, those which ring-true with our own deeply heart-felt desires?

Because there are so many 'facts', so many discourses about what exactly is our *essential nature*, probably the most coherent stance to take is that there isn't any *one* given nature, and thus to arrive to some tentative, more humble position that we have existence, but we don't really have an essential kernel or *essence*.

## ON EXISTENTIALISM

**Nick:** This brings up the philosophy of Existentialism. It advocates living life to its fullest, experiencing every drop of meaning and joy that life has to offer! It stresses personal *responsibility*. It teaches us not to give excuses!

**Deb:** Socrates was said to be an existentialist. Also Kierkegaard. A more-modern figure is Jean Paul Sartre. The recent practitioners have a slogan that supposedly sums up where they stand. Larry, I believe you know to what I'm referring. As we are discussing "human nature" it is appropriate to examine this proposition of theirs. Let's reflect on it a bit. ***Does human existence precede human essence?***

**Larry:** A tenet of the existentialist ideology is that "existence precedes essence". A problem is that the terms in that proposition are vague and undefined.

**Bill:** Our paradigm (framework, model) for Ethics makes sense out of that proposition by interpreting "precedes" to mean "is more valuable than" and by understanding "being of a person" as "our life is our project, and that within limits we can make of it what we will"; and understands "essence" as meaning: our genetics, our talents, traits, and those other attributes mentioned *earlier* by Jack, as well as our anatomy and physiology, body type, etc. {See page 8 above.}

**Carl:** Does "free will" enter into this? As I recall, Sartre emphasizes our freedom to choose, and to live. And freedom to define ourselves.

**Frank:** You ask about "free will." While I don't deny that 'every effect has a cause' I am open to the probability of spontaneous events being a fact of this universe. So not every event has a cause, but every effect does. When we are truly creative we have entered the realm of I-Value, the dimension of playfulness and spontaneity

intuition, insight and what the Zen speak of as 'satori.' There are many, many anomalies in science: unexplained events, which - for all we know - may practically-never be explained. Mysteries remain.

The assumption that we have free will is a good working hypothesis. I would support that contention this way:

I remember once, as a boy, finding a thick, stamped, addressed envelope by my feet in a subway car at a stage in life when I defined myself as destitute. I assumed someone had inadvertently dropped it on the floor. It was lost.

I retrieved it, went to a mailbox on a street-corner and held the envelope (which I imagined might contain cash) between my fingers, hovering, ready to deposit it in the metal box. I vacillated. I noted the tension, the indecisiveness. I would make a motion to throw it in and send the letter on its way, and then I would be very tempted to tear it open and remove the (possible) cash, since it felt padded the way it would if it contained some cash.

What decided the outcome was that I had been studying the Golden Rule a short while ago before this incident occurred. I finally ended up throwing it into the box and sending it on its way to its intended destination.... but it was a struggle - one that I have never forgotten. I felt afterward as if I experienced free will in action!

Nowadays I define myself as prosperous - whereas if I were to compare myself to a multi-millionaire - let alone to a billionaire - I would think myself quite poor. We can define ourselves any way at all - as a matchstick man (a con-artist), or as a man of integrity who takes on responsibility; as superior to others, or as 'just a man' like others in important ways. We can have hubris or **humility**. To understand human beings is to be aware of their **vulnerability**, their fragility. This includes awareness of our own too.

**Larry:** I find that living the truth, honestly, is living knowing that you and your loved ones (and anyone else) might well die at any moment! 'Tomorrow' may never come! Yes, this is a 'raw' sensitive place to live, painfully aware of such a 'brutal truth', but it keeps priorities straight. You don't take each other for granted, people become more

important (and worthy of your precious time) than things. Fortunately, not every moment can be spent in this (painful) awareness, but enough, I find, to 'keep it real'. I practice 'living in the moment.' Yes, I make plans, I have goals; but I like to stay in the here and now – not letting either the future or the past rob from the quality of life in the present.

**Ida:** **Existence** (an Extrinsic Value) is more valuable than **Essence** (which is a Systemic Value).

**Bert:** And **Reality** (an Intrinsic Value) is more valuable than both. Why? Because these are all well-defined terms and relationships in Formal Axiology when it is applied to Metaphysics. {For details, see **Note 4 in the notes to A Unified Theory of Ethics.**}

**Harry:** My life is my project. I have a range of choices. I will not give up on life. Some people might choose to do so. I will affirm life; I have work to finish and so I will do whatever it takes to survive with a glowing health – both physical and moral. I have aims to fulfill. I have projects to complete.

**Nick:** You speak for me too, Harry. My human nature – both my genes and my choices and experience are continually changing. My genes get mutated, sometimes even for the better. **My life is a process**, not something fixed and inevitable. I control my actions. They may be determined by external and internal factors but I am the one who makes decisions in my life, and I am responsible for every decision I have made. I assume that responsibility !

**Bill:** Existentialism affirms and celebrates Life, which is an Intrinsic Value. Life is the condition necessary before value can be ascertained. The Unified Theory of Ethics concurs with that emphasis upon Life.. It holds that if an individual chooses to maximize the amount of value in life s/he should have the opportunity. The Hierarchy of Value – in a formula

it is **I>E>S** -- places Life at the top, indicating that it is worth more than material things, which in turn are worth far more than ideologies, doctrines, black-or-white thinking.

Life, love, integrity, beauty, empathy, compassion, authenticity, etc. - the Intrinsic values - may be summed up in one word, and that word is *goodness*. To aim for goodness is recommended.

**Ed:** The way to achieve that aim is to be a (morally) good person. An ethical imperative that follows from this is: Aim to be good.

**Kay:** Yes, there is a human nature. Yes, our Anatomy and Physiology is our essence. However, many believe it is human to get angry, to blow up, to hate, to fear, to feel anxious, or bitter, and in general to suffer much emotional pain. This new approach to Ethics differs with that view.

{For as Albert Ellis taught, in the Rational-Emotive-Behavioral Therapy he devised (influenced by Epictetus, the Stoic), we can, if we work at it, avoid much emotional pain. How? We tell ourselves *logical* ideas, based upon empirical facts. In contrast, if our self-talk consists of fallacious ideas we are likely to suffer, Instead of over-generalizations, perfectionism, and demands, "musts," he recommends the use of reason.

The illogical or fallacious ideas which cause us emotional anguish are ideas such as - to offer some examples - "I must be perfect," "The world must be fair," "I need everyone to love me," "I am just a victim of events," "Loss and separation should not happen to a nice person like me," "Because I fouled up, I'm worthless" etc., etc. By studying his teachings I learned what he called "The ABCs of emotional insight." I would recommend that every preschool have it in their curriculum to teach it to every child in a form that a child can grasp.}

## OBJECTIVITY AND ETHICS

**Jeb:** Is there anything objective about ethics or morality?

**Kay:** Yes, Jeb, there is. We can argue from the existence of virtually-universally-held beliefs. Research has shown that there is a universal belief that slavery is immoral. Would reasonable people claim that at one time it was right for us to hold slaves, but that now it is not? No. Rather we would reason that then, when we enslaved human beings, we didn't know any better. We were ignorant, or we *lacked the capacity* to I-value.

I would hypothesize that in every instance of moral disagreement it is a case of some of the involved parties not knowing any better. This is based upon the reasonable belief that there is an objective moral system, one that is within the ability of intelligent people to grasp.

**Bill:** And research has further shown that people honor and respect fair-dealing all over the world. They don't want to be cheated. Fairness is regarded as a high value, although there are some difficult cases, in practice, in arriving at what is the fairest settlement. Still people admire a negotiation that results in a win/win, in a mutually beneficial outcome. Being **fair** is one more way to add value. {See pp. 28-29 of [A Unified Theory of Ethics](#).}

**Nick:** Morality is objective in one crucial sense: our brain is wired for moral decision-making. It has enabled us, so far, to survive as a species. Very ancient Chinese traditions and teachings emphasize harmony and order; that too has helped us to survive..

**George:** Yes, and if we are to continue surviving, any field of study which, when applied, would aim us in the direction of a more harmonious world is very, very useful to us. Ethics does that, or has promise for that. Once it is more-thoroughly researched, and the findings are widely publicized and popularized; once its results are the story-lines for children's books, comic books, for movies and TV,, we are likely to flourish and enjoy life even more than we do now.

**Ida:** We should keep in mind that fact of which Nick reminded us, namely that the capacity for moral judgment is "given" to us in our genes. It's not really up to us whether we chose to judge things morally, we simply do it. Recently the science of Neuro-Psychology found this to be a fact. If one grants that facts are objective, then there is **objectivity** in connection with ethics and morality.

## **THE VALUE OF ETHICS**

**Carl:** Yeah, but what is Ethics good for?

**Nick:** As I reflected on the question "What is Ethics good for?" I came to some tentative conclusions, the main one being that it has the potential of making a better world for us all in which to live. I would argue for this conclusion as follows:

We would like to flourish, to feel we are using our talents, and putting them to effective use. We all can be "geniuses" at something. If a study (or awareness of a system) of Ethics helps clarify moral value (*i.e.*, morality) then as a result we have less value-confusion. That means we come to know enough so that we look for more civilized ways to conduct

ourselves rather than pursuing wars, murder, revenge, or societal harm such as 'dissing', blaming, and putting one another down.

With regard to Individual Ethics, if each person said to himself: "What are my natural talents and how can I apply them more effectively?" what would be the result? We would find roles and careers in life that utilize our gifts and thus turn them into strengths. We would be willing to acquire new skills and knowledge to do our tasks more successfully. This would enhance our self-respect. Recall that the Oracle at Delphi told Socrates: KNOW THYSELF!

**Bert:** We all know (or should know) that there is a tremendous amount of suffering in the world, and to use the overused but insightful metaphor, we are all passengers on spaceship Earth. In a very meaningful way we are all tied together in a vast tapestry of causality of which we are an infinitely small thread. But we cannot let the scale of the cosmos distract us from the very real pain around us, a certain amount of which is in our power to alleviate or assuage. Ethics as a discipline teaches compassion, decency, kindness, violence-reduction and harmony.

As George reminded us, any field of study which when applied would aim us in the direction of a more-harmonious world is very useful to us. Ethics does that and will in the future do it more so, as more researchers join in the project, and as it is developed into a rigorous, coherent, widely-accepted discipline .

# **ETHICS AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR**

**Jack:** It is impossible to know the exact causes of 'misbehavior'. Human behavior cannot be predicted. You ethicists just want to rule over the rest of us.

**George:** I fail to see how this is relevant to the Unified Theory of Ethics since the theory does not claim that we can know "the exact cause(s) of misbehavior" nor does it endeavor to predict human behavior, nor does it want to rule anything.

You have shown by your past comments, Jack, that you **do** get the point as to why the Unified Theory has been considered by some to be better than its alternatives. I give you credit for that. And I, for one, am pleased that you want to recommend it to the attention of others.

Please don't take offense, Jack, at my confusion here. I just feel all this about pinpointing an "exact cause of behavior" may be what is known in Logic as a "straw man" fallacy. As you know, the concept "behavior" is the domain of Psychology - a vast field of study which refers to itself as The Science of Behavior. It has varied approaches that can be analyzed by the three dimensions of value ...as follows:

**Systemic:** the work of Stevenson; of Hull; of B. F. Skinner on schedules of reinforcement; etc.

**Extrinsic:** the research studies and explanations of the functional components, such as memory, cognition, belief, mind/brain; aptitude studies; perception studies; conditioning; attitudes; persistence at a task; etc.

**Intrinsic:** the organic psychotherapies, gestalt therapy, logotherapy, etc.

**Jack:** As I recall, it is true that this theory of Ethics reminds us that **much of what we do is caused by self-talk, which may consist of illogical things we tell ourselves** that then results in needless emotional pain. As Kay explained to us, this is elaborated in a school of thought founded by the late Albert Ellis. As we learned, It is y based upon concepts from Epictetus, the Stoic. It is a **cognitive** approach to healing through counseling, and self-counseling. His classic book, Rational Thinking in an Irrational World was his major best-seller. [Albert Ellis \(psychologist\) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

**George:** I would be the last one in the world to claim that there is only one cause of human behavior. ETHICS: A College Course stressed the cognitive influences on our character. At this conference we have been emphasizing a positive approach to being and becoming ethical. However in Ethical Adventures there is a mention of the fact that psychiatrists issue a Manual annually which lists every currently-known perversion, perversity, deviance, and mental abnormality. I So far we have left the tabulation and analysis of immorality to them. Eventually maybe a sub-department of Ethics theory shall intersect with the same concerns as we find in their field of interest.

**Jeb:** I have a question for everyone here. In all the history of academic ethics, do Moral Philosophers ever agree on any principles?

# ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

**Harry:** The following principles, which I have excerpted from *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, are the ones most commonly appealed to in applied ethical discussions<sup>1</sup>:

- Personal benefit: acknowledge the extent to which an action produces beneficial consequences for the individual in question.
- Social benefit: acknowledge the extent to which an action produces beneficial consequences for society.
- Principle of benevolence: help those in need.
- Principle of paternalism: assist others in pursuing their best interests when they cannot do so themselves.
- Principle of harm: do not harm others.
- Principle of honesty: do not deceive others.
- Principle of lawfulness: do not violate the law.
- Principle of autonomy: acknowledge a person's freedom over his/her actions or physical body.
- Principle of justice: acknowledge a person's right to due process, fair compensation for harm done, and fair distribution of benefits.
- Rights: acknowledge a person's rights to life, information, privacy, free expression, and safety.

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(<sup>1</sup>) (Source: The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy - Ethics): [Ethics \[Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy\]](#)

In our paradigm (model) for Ethics (as a coherent discipline) we can now derive many of the above principles from a small set of premises, as follows:

A person of good character so lives as to confer personal and social benefit in his social interactions, for he believes in *the gain/gain principle* (also known as win/win.) This follows from his capacity to Intrinsically value and the spontaneous exercise of this capacity.

Since such an individual Intrinsically values others (whether aware – or not aware -- that this is the ethical way to live), s/he wants to help others when feasible and to assist others in pursuing their best interests.

Because persons of good character I-value others they do not (intentionally) harm others and they intentionally strive to avoid harming others.

**John:** I have a question about that honesty concept. If one acknowledges the Principle of Honesty, are there not exceptions, and would not these exceptions undermine its status as a Principle? If for example, a vigilante gang of citizens demands of me to know where someone is hiding, am I to collaborate in his lynching by being honest about where he is hiding?

**Nick:** On pages 40 *ff.* in Living The Good Life, there is a detailed discussion of "Honesty and Lying" which goes into those very questions - specifically addressing the one offered in your example, John. As we construct the new theory here I trust we all realize that *no answers nor*

*solutions given are final.* All findings are tentative, subject to later development -- same as in physical science.

I would be interested to hear whether those passages argue successfully for the case it makes for honesty in life. Some quite reputable advisors on etiquette maintain that telling 'little white lies' at times is justifiable. Living The Good Life shows how this may largely be avoided:

<http://tinyurl.com/24swmd>

**Frank:** We have also added a couple of other principles, such as The Principle of Ethical Consistency; and, The Ethical Radius. The former indicates that it is a moral error to have one standard for yourself (or for your own country) and another for everyone else. The latter is a measure of how many you include within your in-group, how many you sweep into your 'social circle.' For further details, see the PDF-file, ETHICS: A College Course <http://tinyurl.com/2mj5b3>

**Kay:** The first principle on the list from that internet encyclopedia source asks the question: What's in it for Me? The second on the list asks: What's in it for us? We have already established that the two questions are not incompatible. The "gain/gain" concept indicates that the second question is superior. It is not selfish to inquire as to mutual benefit, nor to wonder How can we help each other?

**Dan:** Nor is it out of place to encourage each other to "walk the talk." If all of us lived up to our highest beliefs about how a noble and good person lives what kind of world would we have?

**Carl:** An improved one.

**Ida:** Yes. A better and more-harmonious one would be the result. Aristotle said that everything and everyone aims for the good. He learned it from Plato, who learned it from Socrates. So let each of us aim for the good, for the ideal of a good person. I pledge that I will.

**Frank:** With regard to the “principle of lawfulness,” The moral philosopher, R. W. Emerson, taught us that a man is not really a man unless he is a nonconformist. There are times, said Tom Paine, as did Henry Thoreau, a disciple of Emerson, when it is moral to break the law; namely, when it is an unjust law. (Many laws, for example, of Germany’s Third Reich, Hitler’s regime, were unjust.)

**John:** Yes, this is known as Conscientious Objection. The Quakers in the early 1800s often did that regarding the issue of human slavery. They declined to hold slaves, and aided runaway slaves to get away. Sometimes they hid them even though prevailing society considered them to be other-people’s property. Emerson in his Essays pointed out that property rights are secondary to human rights. He had a lot to say about the formation of good character.

**Harry:** Even a Mafia boss claims everything he is doing is “good.” Even he aims for the good ...mistakenly, but still well-intentioned. That’s why in this theory we do not give emphasis to intentions, but rather to character development.

**George:** A person of good character has learned to comply with a set of ethical rules (moral prescriptions); and has, further, built in that compliance into a set of habits; and has often forgotten what the original rules were.

By force of habit such a person does the “ethical thing.” The rules s/he learned in her youth were principles of Ethics. Many of them follow from the one imperative to I-value fellow members of one’s species. “I ought to I-value an individual” is the one basic imperative we derive in the coherent discipline which we here have named Ethics. What follows from this? Well, “I am an individual. Thus I ought to I-value myself. And other human beings are also individuals. I must therefore I-value them. Everyone within my ethical radius should be I-valued. I ought to if I can **extend** my ethical radius – those who I consider to be in my in-group.” As to violations of ethical principles – of which there are plenty in this world at the present time – this constitutes our immorality. We might though here and now say a few words about one of its possible causes when it arises in people who are otherwise generally good. Nick, do you have some observations on this topic?

## **HOW DOES IMMORALITY ARISE?**

**Nick:** We try – irrationally – to make an exception to some moral rule, some ethical principle, on behalf of some perceived short-term self-interest. This makes as much sense as driving on the wrong side of the street in traffic. We know on one side of our brain that we may get smashed up – that is one belief we hold – but another side of our mind, another thing we tell ourselves is: “You’ll get away with it. It’s a gamble, but go ahead and bet that you will slip by!” Then we listen to that self-sentence and commit an act we consciously (or subconsciously) know is immoral. Even though the first belief – the one about the fact that we are heading for a crash - has justification in the real world, and thus is rational to believe, we play the tape with the volume

up higher repeating the second unfounded belief over and over to ourself. It wins out and immorality results.

**Harry:** It rarely if ever occurs to us to ask: Is it possible that my perception could be wrong? Should I maybe *change* my conceptions and perceptions?

**Dan:** We should each of us have a vested interest in preserving and in many respects improving the conditions that are prerequisites for our continued existence on this planet. A continuation down this current road of resource exploitation and unchecked industrial expansion is undoubtedly unsustainable.

## **SELF-INTEREST AND SELFISHNESS REVISITED**

**Bill:** To say that “If doing good deeds brings a person joy they are only being selfish” is a misuse of language because selfishness entails a disregard for others (instead of a positive regard – which is what Ethics requires.)

Yet doing a good deed alone, it seems to me, is not enough to rate high in morality. Neither is the number of people who benefit from a certain deed relevant to the degree of morality involved.

Some people act spontaneously in performing acts of kindness and they do it without calculation or aforethought.

**Harry:** True. Some people live spontaneously and do not calculate: what's in it for me? Instead - if they ask anything - they ask: **What's in it for us?** ...they talk as if they care for

others, and they "walk the talk." (Those who cannot feel caring toward others are known as 'psychopaths.')

To be **selfish** is to be devoted to or caring only for oneself regardless of others. This concept "selfish" should not be confused with another concept with which it is very often conflated, namely, "self-interest." That idea, **self-interest**, means: regard for one's advantage, or aiming to satisfy one's goals.. These are two distinctly different ideas, and one may have *enlightened self-interest*: That is, one may appreciate the fact that what is *truly* in your interest is also in mine. If you develop your talents and capacities, such as your ability to respond (responsibility), and if you give your gifts to the world as you engage in self-expression; you, let's say, either create something, or you entertain the rest of us; **that is in my self-interest also**. I am aware of that.

**Carl:** In any event, they are still acting to satisfy themselves. [Have you ever heard some local news hero saying something to the effect of "I wouldn't be able to live with myself if I didn't try to help"?] They have made the choice that risking their health or safety was less important than the psychic baggage they would have to carry around if they did nothing. They still wanted to be most satisfied.

**Harry:** Yes, Carl, they are acting out of self-interest yet they are acting unselfishly. They are showing kindness or being philanthropic. Say they give money to a beggar that they never expect to see again. That cannot be said to be selfish by the very definition of the term 'selfish' which speaks of 'disregarding others.'

**Rick:** To give to charity out of vanity or guilt is one thing, and to give from a real generosity of the heart is entirely something else. Virtue can be its own reward, Self-sacrifice

is something to be suspicious of, generally. Symbiotic relationships are ideal. Those who don't love themselves don't love others either.

**Carl:** Ayn Rand has argued in favor of *individualism*. “Be selfish” she said. “It will all work out for the best.”

**George:** The axiological analysis defining the degrees of value in social relations is as follows:

S: conformity

E: individualism

I: individuality.

Hence, “individualism,” defined correctly as an Extrinsic value is infinitely less valuable than “individuality” which is an Intrinsic value. Why not settle for the best. One can be an individual who has individuality but “individualism” is the philosophy of the self-made person. – one who “did it on his own.”

Upon investigation it turns out that every "self-made man" had enormous help from public utilities;, from government agencies; and (sometimes hidden) subsidies from the public till. They had help from mentors; and/or from resources which society graciously provided them. It is a myth that a so-called “self-made person” did it on his or her own. They had help. They were not independent but were rather interdependent. We need each other. We need a sense of ethics – in this case, Social Ethics.

## HOW TO OVERCOME CORRUPTION

**Dan:** In his column bearing the caption “Stumbling Blocks on the Path of Righteousness”, Benedict Carey writes, in a N. Y. Times article published May 4, 2009:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/05/health/05mind.html?scp=1&sq=Mind+--+Stumbling+Blocks&st=nyt>

Most people are adamant: They would never do it. Ever. Never deliberately inflict pain on another person, just to obtain information. Ever artificially inflate the value of some financial product, just to take advantage of others’ ignorance. Certainly never, ever become a deadbeat and accept a government bailout.

Then, he adds: “Turn on the news: shady bankers, savage interrogators and deadbeats are everywhere.”

This raises the issue of personal corruption and whether that serves to block all attempts at applying the theories of Ethics to the real world. I shall excerpt one more quote from Mr. Carey which summarizes some recent research findings highly relevant to this topic of our human tendency to easily slip into moral corruption:

People tend to be overly optimistic about their own abilities and fortunes — to overestimate their standing in class, their discipline, their sincerity.

But this self-inflating bias may be even stronger when it comes to moral judgment, and it can greatly influence how people judge others’ actions, and ultimately their own. Culture, religious belief and experience all help shape a person’s sense of moral standing in relation to others, psychologists say, and new research is helping to clarify when such feelings of superiority are helpful and when they are self-defeating.

**Nick:** Professor David Dunning of Cornell University, based on empirical studies which he has done, informs us that “many types of behavior are driven far more by the situation than by the force of personality. What *someone else did* in that situation is a very strong warning about what you yourself would do.” It may be what they actually did -- or what *you believe they did* based on what you heard.

Hypocrisy is rampant today, no question about it. Dr. N. Epley, a psychologist at The University of Chicago, designs experiments to test that gap between how we think we’ll behave and how we actually behave. He tells us it is a function of both our intentions and of “how well we simulate the situation.”

**Ida:** People often say to themselves sentences such as this “If we just fire all the immoral Wall Street bankers and replace them with moral ones, we’ll solve the problem.” Is it possible they may be wrong about this? Perhaps it also takes strong regulations on the part of government agencies, as well as strong enforcement of those good laws.

**Carl:** However, as the late Sydney Harris, a columnist with *The Chicago Daily News*, once wrote:

“Systems” are begun for the purpose of unifying, organizing and expediting processes; but they quickly take on a life of their own, and unless they are closely watched and regularly revised, all systems end in retarding and clogging the very processes they were designed to aid.

**George:** Of course. This fits with the Hierarchy of Value discovered by R. S. Hartman. He placed Systemic Value lower than Extrinsic, which in turn was below Intrinsic.

S-value is the least of the three basic dimensions of value, S, E, and I. All this is based on the degree of meaning upon which each dimension is derived and defined, namely, finite, countable, and uncountable meaning. These dimensions are sets of predicates. Now I'm getting too technical for a general audience, so I'll stop here.

My point is that systems are worth the least compared with other values such as liberty, integrity, community and beauty. We need government to regulate but we need sunlight (complete transparency) as to what the government agents are doing, as well as sunset laws for when a bureau outlives its usefulness. Who today would want to board a plane without the FAA monitoring safety, or would want to eat some packaged meat without the Agriculture Department inspecting it first for toxicity?!

**Frank:** Yes, if individuals are Intrinsically-valued one cares about their safety. This verges into the territory of Political Science, but Aristotle taught us that that field and Social Ethics do indeed overlap.

**Deb:** So what can we do about corruption?

**Carl:** We see all around us examples of people acting badly, cases of arrogance, laziness, hypocrisy, unbridled selfishness. It's all a form of corruption. They behave as if something is wrong with them. It's as if by their very nature they've got a defect.

**Nick:** Whether humans are corrupt by nature, or whether society, environs, or child-rearing practices makes them so, **we all, as individuals, can improve ourselves.**

**Ida:** We need to find motivation and discipline for some necessary routines. For **doing what we love to do** we need no motivation: we will do it. We'll even go without eating at times to do it.

**Frank:** To *pursue excellence* – which is something that Ethics teaches us we ought to do – *to pursue it even* in the field for which we have a talent - we do need some incentive. That incentive might be our awareness of Ethics.

**Bill:** How so?

**Frank:** Ethics teaches us that the pursuit of excellence is a high value, close to the uncountable-value which is Intrinsic Value – but not quite as valuable as Intrinsic Value (I-value) is. Still, excellence is right up there! It turns out to be very rewarding. It contributes mightily to a meaningful life.

**Nick:** Exactly. That's what I was driving at when I recommended self-improvement as a fine way to add value. The achievement of a value-added life is at what we should aim.

**Dan:** We are "corrupt" because we are ignorant of how not to be, and/or because we haven't yet made goodness our goal, at which we aim. We ought to aim to be excellent in whatever project we undertake, aim to master the subject if at all possible. By that I mean we ought to become effective in it, *at least an expert* in it, if not a real master.

Once we are keenly aware of the benefits of avoiding all traces of corruption in our life, and once we are smart enough to know how to develop the skills that are directly

incompatible with the type of corruption we have, those contrary good habits will substitute for the bad habits. Then we will likely no longer be corrupt - in that area.

**Enrico:** Regarding what Dan and Nick were telling us, an inflated sense of personal virtue is incompatible with the humility – and the consciousness of our vulnerability – that Ethics education would cultivate.

As Benedict Carey once wrote: “Walking around in a pair of moral platform shoes does make it harder to get up when you fall.”

**Joe:** We'll *never* get rid of murder !

**Nick:** Joe, **never** is a long time !! What evidence can you offer that we "will never get rid of murder"? Are you just going by the way we conduct ourselves now?!!!? What does that prove about the future??

Although for centuries multitudes believed the Earth was flat, a few individuals like Copernicus knew it wasn't. Some of those few may have said to themselves: "People will never stop believing this ignorant garbage!" Was that true? Did their declaring that negative view make it so? Of course not.

**Deb:** I predict that once awareness of Ethics spreads around we will see an astounding reduction in the murder rate on this globe. Thus we will have virtually extinguished this behavior. People will be more civilized. They'll be kinder to one another than. We shall overcome.

Peter Singer - who teaches Philosophy at Princeton - has an excellent review of Dr. Appiah's Bryn Mawr lecture series which constitutes the book, **EXPERIMENTS IN ETHICS**.

**Here is a link to it: [Putting Practice Into Ethics - January](#)**

[16, 2008 - The New York Sun.](#) I recommend a perusal of that article to gain insight as to what is important in the field of Ethics.

He points out that quite minor aspects of a situation may cause us to deviate from doing the right thing IF our commitment to doing the right thing is not strong enough. That **aim to be a good person** which we learn from the Unified Theory of Ethics is a key ingredient of our moral character, and it will make all the difference in whether corruption triumphs or we triumph over it. Every candidate for public office may be asked if he has that as a goal; and then asked: What does it specifically mean to you?

**Jim:** Why is it not possible for humankind to progress beyond the tyrannies of militarism, terrorism, war, social injustice, destructive environmental exploitation and the push toward conformity rather than creativity that has dominated every generation up till now?

**Frank:** I believe it is possible. And this is not just my view. John Milton ( 1609-1674) believed in the possibility when he wrote this line: *“O yet a nobler task awaits thy hand for what can war but endless war still breed?”*

**Enrico:** To intrinsically value an individual is to appreciate that rankism is an Ethical fallacy; and to support that view is to be inherently opposed to institutional and organizational hierarchies. Also when you I-value a person you advocate liberty for that person. And you do not want any claim that someone is higher on any hierarchy than that person. Dan, what are your thoughts regarding the world situation?

**Dan:** We should each of us have a vested interest in preserving and in many respects improving the conditions that are prerequisites for our continued existence on this planet. A continuation down this current road of resource exploitation and unchecked industrial expansion is undoubtedly unsustainable. That, at least, is one reason why we should work for a better world. I am though aware that Matt Ridley, in his latest book, *The Rational Optimist*, does not agree with my point on “unchecked industrial expansion.”. I find some of his reasoning to be faulty. There is more to life than the specialization of labor and an economy that encourages exchange. He *is* correct though in his view when he argues that ideas should be freely exchanged and shared. To do research at times means to borrow from multiple sources. I am glad and encouraged that the internet, our World Brain, facilitates such free exchange. Avoiding petty egotism and cultivating humility is the way to go.

## **THE ETHICS OF BELIEF**

**John:** Does the new paradigm for Ethics have anything to say about belief, or about respect for facts and evidence?

**Bill:** As you know meta-Ethics is based upon Robert Hartman’s creation which he named Formal Axiology. As one of the deductions in that discipline, Hartman showed how sound value judgment must be based on fact. Value and fact are intimately related, as he demonstrated in his classic paper, “Axiology As A Science”, (1973) *The Journal of Human Relations*, Vol. 21, no. 1, It has been reprinted and is available [HERE](http://www.hartmaninstitute.org/html/AxiologyAsAScience.html):

He clearly explains how value itself depends upon the properties of what is being valued. The properties are the facts. When we want to evaluate a graphic work of art we consult someone who knows the *facts* about

pigments, colors, canvasses, painters, etc. We require credible evidence! Hence the implication here is that our beliefs ought to be grounded in evidence.

**Bert:** Did you know that William K. Clifford, a philosopher/mathematician stimulated, or provoked, William James, the philosopher/psychologist - who I admire for the quality of his work and for the experiments he ran to support it and back it up with evidence - to write his classic essay, The Will To Believe.  
<http://www.webster.edu/~corbetre/philosophy/misc/james.html> Also  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Will\\_to\\_Believe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Will_to_Believe)

W. K. Clifford<sup>1</sup> took a strong stand - some would say an extreme position – for which he argues vigorously. He wrote: “It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.” This is a principle of ethics that provides a **healthy** dose of **skepticism**. And just as importantly it eventually helps to illustrate the limits of knowledge. The danger is not only in having incorrect beliefs or opinions but also in the certainty in which these ideas are entertained.

I agree with Clifford’s argument that founding a belief on insufficient evidence is unethical because it is not only irrational to choose to be irrational but also ethically irresponsible to choose to be so. since as a social species we live in communities: Our beliefs and their resultant actions directly influence those around us.

**Dan:** Some people will believe anything! That’s what is known as credulity. A credulous individual, one who is uninformed or is gullible, may easily have ‘the wool pulled over his eyes’ to everyone’s detriment. Such a person is not being true to his own true self: he is not being fully moral. For as we learned in our earlier conferences, that’s what morality is, namely, being true to oneself. It can be understood as self increasingly corresponding to an improving self-ideal, or Self. That self-ideal would eventually include being well-informed and having a healthy skepticism, and a cosmic optimism.

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1) William Kingdon Clifford, The Ethics of Belief, *Contemporary Review* (1877).

**Nick:** There are literally countless instances in which humanity has suffered because people “knew” they were right without a doubt and without the requirement of evidence. Every holy war serves as an example of the results of belief on insufficient evidence because the participants believe that violence is the only way to resolve disputes. A moral individual is opposed to dogma. She wants to avoid being doctrinaire. She holds her beliefs tentatively, in the same way as scientists do, or should do.

Speaking of science, it is tragic that so many people have so little conception of the harm that credulity has caused and continued to cause, and so little understanding of the benefits the world has reaped from science and technology (applied science).

For example, within the past one hundred years the average lifespan in the U.S. has increased by 50% due to improved sanitation and public health measures, as well as better knowledge about nutrition, due to scientific research. That is one benefit that some of us appreciate.

**Tom:** How would you define “credulity”?

**Nick:** Credulity [kruh-dyoo-li-tee] — noun. **willingness to believe or trust too readily, esp. without proper or adequate evidence; gullibility.**

**Jerry:** Even further under the radar for most people are the positive social changes that have occurred due to an improved understanding of the human species. Just hearing about the Stanley Milgram obedience-to-authority experiment makes people more likely to challenge what they are told.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanley\\_Milgram\\_shock\\_experiments](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanley_Milgram_shock_experiments)

**Bert:** The danger is not only in having incorrect beliefs/opinions but also in the certainty in which these ideas are entertained. I imagine suicide bombers must feel pretty certain in their beliefs.

**Joe:** True. It’s okay to entertain hypotheses. It is a false dichotomy to say, as William James may have done, that the choice is between believing nothing or entertaining possible falsehoods. That is

systemic-thinking; “it either has to be this or that.” No other options are considered. Working hypotheses and assumptions are a necessary part of belief-formation, so there are other options..

I would argue that each time anyone holds an *incorrect* belief they make it less likely that they will in the future be able to recognize a theory that better aligns itself with the evidence.

**Deb:** As the rate of technological development increases the ability to change our society to fit the real world. It is good to be aware that it is not solely the content of belief that matters, but the rigidity with which it is held. The survival of the human race might some day hinge on the extent of flexibility that society permits.

**Jeb:** I doubt anyone here would quarrel with the proposition that how children are raised, how their character is formed, is highly relevant to whether they are ethical in later life. Nick, would you please host a discussion on this theme?

## **PARENTING AND THE ETHICAL LIFE**

**Nick:** Yes. Thanks Jeb. Bill, Dan, and Bert were emphasizing the importance of facts. Another fact is that morality can be influenced by how one is brought up. Do any of you have any research findings to back this up? George, you’ve been studying this topic; can you share any results with us?

**George:** I am happy to report that 30 years of research in Psychology has found that **empathy** is the basis of moral development and moral reasoning. Children who are raised with parental techniques which encourage intrinsic valuation, and which reinforce empathy, attain higher degrees of empathic ability and are significantly more moral than those that are raised with power assertion, with punishment. In contrast, child-raising systems based on appropriate and well-timed rewards produce noticeable results

with regard to factors such as conscience, altruism, and moral reasoning.

Children who have greater empathy skills have higher levels of every one of those aspects, and in later life they tend to give credit for any kindnesses they have shown to their feelings of empathic connection and inclusiveness.

**Dan:** On the negative side of the ledger, individuals who are sexually abused as children are at far greater risk than their peers for a whole host of psychological, sexual and emotional problems. Common consequences of child sexual abuse include drug and alcohol abuse, promiscuity, a range of sexual problems, depression and suicide. These problems can follow the victim for his or her entire life. Research also shows that there is a strong correlation between being sexually abused as a child and becoming an abuser of children as an adult.

Further, child sexual abuse is not a rare occurrence. One in four girls and one in six boys experience some kind of sexual abuse before their eighteenth birthday. Though not every case is traumatic, there are millions of individuals who suffer the legacy of abuse every day of their lives. Only a tiny percentage of these go on to commit criminal or violent acts, but given the magnitude of the problem, it is certain that child sexual abuse is at the root of many of society's problems.

**Deb:** There is no question but that child-rearing practices make an enormous moral difference. Parents really ought to study up on how to handle various issues that will come up and also be aware of the stages in child development. Education is the answer. Included in that is life-coaching for adults counseling, and therapy when required.

**Larry:** Earlier Dan and Ida, both spoke of working for a *better* world. Let's now remind everyone of the definition of a key term in that phrase "a better world." . "Better" means: *richer in meaning; more valuable*. "Value" itself is very-carefully defined, with precision, in Chapter 2 of the College Course manual. A link to that is here: <http://tinyurl.com/2mj5b3>

We value something and we like something but keep in mind that "valuing" and "liking" are two different concepts and do not necessarily correlate. The former concept belongs to Value Theory while "liking" belongs to Psychology. That is where it is analyzed and explained. Right now we ought to consider that makes an ethical theory "a better theory." Frank, I understand that you have some ideas on that topic, so I call on you. Would you be so kind as to share your findings with us?

## **WHAT CRITERIA SHOULD A THEORY FULFILL?**

**Frank:** Some contend that this current paradigm we are constructing here is a better theory – and specifically a better ethical theory - than some of the alternatives because:

- 1) it contains variables in its axioms and may thus *cover a wider range of applications* than any of the rival theories when these variables are interpreted in terms of specific situations and events;
- 2) it provides a frame-of-reference to which more sub-models can cohere;
- 3) this paradigm is a synthesis of the prevailing conventional schools of thought that the academy teaches, with its stress on character, happiness; human dignity, universality, obligations, sanctions, conscience, varied phenomenological perspectives, etc., etc
- 4) it has a logical thread of reasoning which binds the system together. Recall that discussion in Ethical Adventures;
- 5) it has already been applied to a wide range of concrete issues and has provided some sensible, tentative answers;

6) it is compatible with the many and varied forms of The Golden Rule; See <http://www.religioustolerance.org/reciproc3.htm> and <http://www.jcu.edu/philosophy/gensler/goldrule.htm>

7) it incorporates principles such as the avoidance of causing suffering; natural rights based upon human nature; cultural evolution; avoidance of double standards, etc., etc.

8) it has a calculus of values which enables deductions of new principles;

9) Its definition of the term "Intrinsic Value" overlaps with and confirms Phenomenology's conception of Intentionality.

10) It manages to define "good" in a manner that avoids committing The Naturalistic Fallacy propounded by G. E. Moore since the Axiom of Value – which defines "good" -- employs set theory and class membership: thus good is **not** defined in terms of pleasure, preference; feelings, evolution, satisfaction, realization, nor any other naturalistic quality; thus it passes The Open Question Test;

11) it derives a series of 'ethical fallacies' and shows why they are errors in reasoning;

12) it is expandable and has what Hempel calls 'theoretical and empirical import';

13) it can embrace multi-cultural schools of ethical thought such as Shinto ethics, Confucianism, buddhistic ethics, taoist ethics, etc., which the major academic theories cannot comfortably do;

14) it has a theory of justice, of authenticity, of ethical evolution, of moral corruption, and is able to explain things that the other schools cannot;

15) it is able to define exactly what "Ethics" is as a study in its own right; it also defines with some precision "morality" and "hypocrisy" and shows how they vary inversely;

16) it applies to business and management and shares a common premise with the prevailing principle that drives enterprises, namely to *add value*.

17) the meta-ethics for this theory is able to offer a precise definition for key terms such as 'better,' 'appreciation,' 'bad,' 'fair,' 'ought', 'approval' etc, No other theory so far accomplishes this.

For example the definition of *better* in the meta-ethics is this: ““X is better than Y” if and only if – all else being equal – X has more features than Y. Hence X is richer in meaning than Y is. (If, say, X refers to an appliance, one of the features may be ‘simplicity of use.’)

If the concept is shifted to make it more specific, then the issue of weighting comes into play: the more specific and concrete the concept, the more valuable it is, the more it ‘weighs.’ We must be careful not to unintentionally shift the concept to a lower level of abstraction: A ‘ball’ is, say, **Y**; but a ‘beach ball’ is **Y<sub>1</sub>**. A *better theory* will have more predicates in its meaning since it applies to a wider range of data.

Based upon reason, a reader, whether a student, or professional, will be able to decide which theory she/he wants to embrace.

Each person may choose for himself. He/she may decide he wants the one that has more features relevant to the field, and thus complies with the definition of “a better theory.”

Enrico, do you have any thoughts on the concept “happiness,” a topic with was analyzed and explained in Chapter 10 of Ethics: A College Course.

**Enrico:** You may be interested in this update on advances in the extension of the concept, “happiness.” The Gallup polling organization has a Well-Being Index, a sub-section of which measures Happiness. Here is a link to it:  
<http://www.gallup.com/poll/122264/Well-Being-Hawaii-Utah-Top-Nation.aspx#1>

Furthermore, Hannah Booth, writing for the *Weekend Guardian*, 8-15-09, gives us “7 Steps to Instant Happiness” which, you can be assured, really work when applied: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2009/aug/15/expert-advice-happy?utm>

**George:** We trust we have given readers some thoughts upon which to reflect as we work to devise an ethics fertile enough to account for many of the significant data. Let’s leave it at that for now, until we reconvene.

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Matt Ridley, *The Rational Optimist: How Prosperity Evolves* (NY: Harper, 2010).

This book shows the value of interdependence; it advocates sharing of ideas rather than hoarding them and keeping them private.

[http://www.amazon.com/Rational-Optimist-How-Prosperity-Evolves/product-reviews/006145205X/ref=dp\\_top\\_cm\\_cr\\_acr\\_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1](http://www.amazon.com/Rational-Optimist-How-Prosperity-Evolves/product-reviews/006145205X/ref=dp_top_cm_cr_acr_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1)

Robert Wright, *NONZERO: The Logic of Human Destiny* (NY: Pantheon Books, 2001)

The writer here discusses the ethical implications of complexity, cooperation, and networking. He portrays the irrationality of zero-sum games such as warfare; as well as showing the benefits of non-zero-sum relationships.

[http://www.amazon.com/Nonzero-Logic-Destiny-Robert-Wright/product-reviews/0679758941/ref=dp\\_top\\_cm\\_cr\\_acr\\_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1](http://www.amazon.com/Nonzero-Logic-Destiny-Robert-Wright/product-reviews/0679758941/ref=dp_top_cm_cr_acr_txt?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1)