

# Corporate roles, personal virtues: an aristotelean approach to business ethics



Aristotelian Approach is a way to look at individuals in a corporation the same way Aristotle looked at people in the environment, by taking individuals into consideration over society, it focuses on individual habits of character to do good. Aristotle believed rights are important but the concern is more with the individuals' virtues. There are six dimensions of this ethics: Community, excellence, role identity, integrity, judgment, holism (University of Phoenix, 2009). In recent years there has been an increased interest in the application of Aristotelian virtue to business ethics.

The objective of this paper is to describe the moral and intellectual virtues defined by Aristotle and the types of pedagogy that might be used to integrate virtue ethics into the business curriculum. Virtues are acquired human qualities, the excellences of character, which enable a person to achieve the good life. In business, the virtues facilitate successful cooperation and enable the community to achieve its collective goals. The cultivation of virtue in students requires imparting knowledge about virtue and training students to be virtuous.

A variety of instructional techniques are discussed including using case studies, collaborative and cooperative learning, role-playing, and video presentations. Business educators should emphasize to students that virtue considerations apply both to possible actions they may take and to themselves as moral agents. Since faculty may be viewed as role models, it is especially important that they set proper standards of behavior for students to emulate. In his article, "An Aristotelean Approach to Business Ethics," Robert Solomon argues that business should be viewed from the Aristotle way.

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He discusses that this view is not something very new but something that originated back to the ancient times. “ What the Aristotelean approach promises is not something novel and scientific but an approach that is very staid and established and above all very human. ” This approach differs from other philosophies that we have learned in class because it incorporates and combines one’s personal values and one’s business values. The one motive that every individual ought to aim for is something that benefits the community.

The individuals and the businesses are part of the larger community, where individuals have to “ strive to excel, to bring out what is best in ourselves and our shared enterprise. ” Previously, Albert Carr separates personal ethics and business ethics; how one can follow the ‘ golden rule’ in their personal life, but discard the gold rule in business and become game players whose ultimate goal is to win in business. The Aristotelean approach, on the other hand, argues that one should not pretend to separate personal ethics from business ethics.

‘ The Bottom Line’ should not be the most important thing, but it is “ ultimately one’s character, one’s integrity, that determines happiness. ”

Thus Solomon does not agree with Ayn Rand’s egoism approach of selfishness nor does he agree with being fully vested to a corporation’s or its shareholder’s interest. This is a lose-lose situation when trying to chose between profits and social responsibility. The Aristotelean approach is a win-win solution, where both the individual and the corporation is happy.