

Ethics and Morality: Fortitude and Courage

Nicole Gorra

The City University of New York, College of Staten Island

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Introduction

Morals and ethics are definitive components of who one is and what one gives value to. In congruence to morals and ethics, faith, culture, and societal systems intersect. The stated attributes comprehensively amalgamate and lend themselves to a person's identity. When behavior and values do not align, morals and ethics are become compromised. It is paramount that the highest morals and ethical standards are upheld within the micro and macro-level of all systems, particularly so as society moves through what can be argued as a revolutionary time. Accountability starts within oneself and expands to groups, government, and policies. This body of work will speak to the virtues of fortitude and courage, and the theological virtue of faith.

Practicing Virtue, Relevance to Self

Although it can be challenging to see oneself subjectively, I believe that I am a person of great courage and fortitude. Courage, fortitude, and deep faith have carried me through challenging life events, and I hope to inspire the individuals I serve to look both within and outside of themselves to endure and to persevere. After several years of struggling with mental health challenges and addiction, my father completed suicide; I was 15. I do not have siblings, and as was common for a woman of her generation and immigration status my mother was without marketable job skills or formal education- as a result, without income. Fortunately, I did not have to terminate my high school education, but I did have to take on the responsibility of providing for both myself and a dependent parent; a responsibility I continue to manage. It is also for this reason that I was unable to attend college at a traditional age. I am doing so now at 41, as I believe it is never too late to fulfill a dream. Having survived a traumatic life event as an adolescent, growing up fatherless, and bearing the stigma and shame of having a parent die from

suicide completion I can attribute my processing, recovery, and greatest successes to that of courage, fortitude, and faith. I deeply believe I was meant to overcome great trials to serve other people during their greatest trials. My drive and ambitions are the byproducts of knowing that being courageous and persevering through what feels insurmountable, is what often leads to growth and depth of character. One's fortitude and refusal to give up is also what moves communities, demographics, and governments in the direction of progress. Progress often begins by lending help to what could be one individual at a time and having the ability to identify and empathize with their experience, thus empowering them to push forward. It is micro-level advancements that organically evolve into macro-level advancements (Knorr-Cetina & Cicourel, 2015).

Through deep faith, I have persevered through extraordinary circumstances, and have discovered my life's work. Social work is the discipline I am pursuing. I am currently in my third year of graduate school. I hope to inspire others to exercise deep morality and ethics- the backbone of the social work industry as highlighted in the core competencies section of the NASW (CSWE, 2015; NASW, 2017). As aforementioned, although I wanted to, unfortunately, for financial reasons, and having had other responsibilities, I was unable to attend college seamlessly after graduating high school. It was until I was close to 40 years old that I had the opportunity and accessibility. I began working quite young out of necessity. I am an industrious and hard-working woman, as oftentimes I am working more than one job. I always knew I wanted more for myself, and importantly, more fulfillment from my work. I knew I wanted to use my skill set to be of service. With sacrifices and concessions, I now have the opportunity to access higher education. I could not have made it this far without harnessing the core virtues espoused upon within this essay. In inquiring and researching the process of returning to school

later in life, and having graduated high school nearly twenty years prior, I was starting from scratch and feeling intimidated. I would have to continue to work full time, as I am head of household and support not only myself but a dependent parent. I began my undergraduate degree in the spring of 2017 and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Biological Psychology in the summer of 2019. I completed my undergraduate degree in 2.5 years while working full time and maintained a GPA of 3.9. I enjoy my studies and have had the pleasure of working with remarkable professors. Most of which have served as the inspiration for my wanting to move forward to a doctoral program after completing my master's degree.

I plan to use my education along with the innate qualities of my character to not just be of service to other people but to facilitate progress and growth within my community and within my field on a macro level. One can say that we all need special individuals in our lives to help us see the potential in us that we are sometimes unable to see in ourselves. I want to facilitate and provide that guidance to others. Research supports that the sequences of poverty, addiction, and family or relational abuse can and will frequently repeat themselves systematically through the generations; goals become harder to accomplish, but not impossible (Adams et al., 2018). With deep faith, and in harnessing fortitude, individuals can rise above otherwise dire life circumstances. Morally and ethically, we should all be entitled to the same opportunities that life has to offer- particularly those that constitute basic human rights. We live in an unfair world where this is not always so, and I want to commit myself to work that lends itself to progress and change.

Personal Goals

My life experiences have been my greatest source of education in learning how to be accepting and withhold judgment while showing compassion and empathy towards another. It

cannot be argued that veterans are an underserved demographic- most certainly a demographic that encompasses fortitude and courage. Tragically, suicide completion (which resonates personally for me) exceeds combat as their leading cause of death, among other challenges such as physical and/or psychological injury, lack of education, homelessness, and unemployment (Hester, 2017). I plan to use my skill set to vehemently serve this population, as they comprise several vulnerabilities and diversities. My education, training, and skill set will provide me with the chance to work in a variety of different settings within the community and will award me the opportunity to work and generate movement in the direction of concerted growth and transformation. A difference and positive impact will be made in the life of another person because of our work together.

Although ethics and morals are abstractly different, they deliver the same consequence-integral behavior that supports good judgment, and the discernment of right and wrong. Morals are the personal values and belief systems we hold ourselves to while ethics are more aligned to societal and cultural standards. When the two intersect an individual's depth of character is exposed. The society one lives in and the way one is socialized will greatly impact the morality and ethical standards one holds themselves to. Extenuating circumstances will explain unethical and immoral behavior, but not align to or support the behavior. Our moral compass, values, and ethics are developed through our experiences and what we are subject to. Such systems impact our deepest beliefs and thought processes. They are what guide us through life, and the strength of our character is reflected and can be measured in the choices we make and the lives we lead.

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