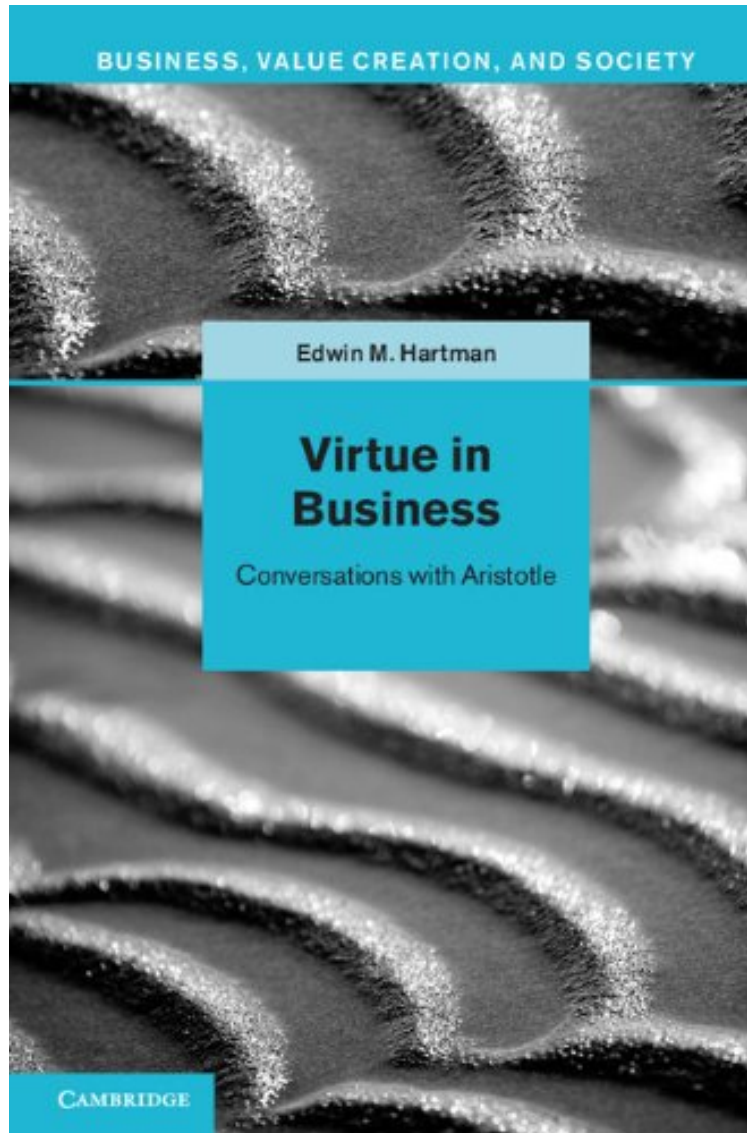


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## **Virtue in Business: Conversations with Aristotle (Business, Value Creation, and Society)**

*Edwin M. Hartman*

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**Edwin M. Hartman : Virtue in Business: Conversations with Aristotle (Business, Value Creation, and Society)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Virtue in Business: Conversations with Aristotle (Business, Value Creation, and Society)*:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Thoughtful argument for the relevance of virtue ethics to business (between 4.0 and 4.5 stars)By A. J. SutterThis book offers a thoughtful summary of, and apologia for, virtue ethics in a business context. The author (EH) has a broad knowledge not only of the writings of the key philosopher for this field,

Aristotle, but also of contemporary business ethics literature, some of it very recent (within months of the book's electronic publication). And he does a good job of explaining many sophisticated philosophical ideas in clear and direct language, quite unlike most academic philosophy. The first four chapters of the book concentrate on explaining Aristotle's ideas. Chapter 5 then applies them to an organizational context, often using Alasdair MacIntyre's somewhat anti-business "After Virtue" (1981) -- a book often credited with inspiring a modern revival of interest in virtue ethics -- as a foil. EH's goal is to show that it is possible to lead a virtuous life within a capitalist business. Chapter 6 has many interesting things to say about the challenges of teaching virtue ethics, and Chapter 7 considers whether this chunk of Aristotelianism has relevance in a multicultural business world. I myself teach a short module of business ethics in leadership training programs for corporate executives, though at between 35 and 55 years old they may be a bit older than EH's usual students. I agree with EH that virtue ethics is in many situations a superior approach to the ethical dilemmas faced by businesspeople -- and that it's also the most challenging to teach. Students are usually more comfortable with what they perceive as the simple rules and algorithms of deontological and utilitarian ethical approaches. EH's observation, "The notion that business is essentially about maximizing something can create a mindset that a business ethics course can barely penetrate" [64%] made me laugh out loud in sympathy. However, my teaching experience also makes me skeptical that this book would be enjoyable reading for any but the most intellectual and dedicated business executives (a few of whom might instead dive straight into Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics). A lot of the discussion focuses more on the writings of other ethicists than on examples from life in business organizations. In comparison, Michael Sandel's books are much richer in concrete illustrations of ethical problems. For students, especially ones who are already in the business world, I think a book like Schwartz and Sharpe's "Practical Wisdom: The Right Way to Do the Right Thing" (2010) is a more user-friendly introduction to Aristotelian ideas. EH's book may be more appropriate as a motivating pep-talk for ethics instructors. EH warns us in the introduction that this is a particular interpretation of Aristotle with which some might disagree, and indeed I did on some small points. Some of his interpretations made use of relatively modern philosophical concepts, such as his references to "rationality" (which doesn't appear in the translation of the Nic. Eth. that EH relies on), or when he says that Aristotle had a "deficient notion of rights" (Chap. 3, n.25; rights didn't become prominent in political thought until roughly 2000 years after Aristotle's death). Elsewhere, he speaks of buying someone lunch as "creating eudaimonia for you and him" [18%]; I had thought of eudaimonia as something determined over much longer timeframes. A strength of the book is its discussion of how each person is responsible for choosing his or her own commitments; I found it a bit narrow, then, that the discussion of business was always in a capitalist, "free market" context. Maybe it's inherently more virtuous to choose to work for a non-profit, or a cooperative, or in other sectors of the "solidarity economy." It would have been nice to see this issue discussed, just as it would have been nice to see some general recognition of Continental authors on ethics and economy, to diversify the very "Anglo-Saxon" crew in the bibliography (I'm speaking intellectually, of course, not ethnically). The work of Luigino Bruni, Stefano Zamagni and many other Italian scholars in the field of "civil economy" is especially pertinent, because it, too, rests ultimately on an Aristotelian foundation. Some of that group's work is available in English. I read this book in an ebook edition (Kindle for iPad), because it was the only edition available even more than a month past the publisher's official release dates for the other ones. At the time, the price was less than 25% of the hardcover's, and less than 50% of the paperback's; I hope that the pricing is still so reasonable when you read this. I find reading ebooks quite unpleasant and inefficient, but this was less exasperating than some. In particular, navigating from text to endnotes to bibliography and back again was fairly fluid. I do wish the publisher had included real page numbers, though. All in all, a solid book about a diffuse-seeming topic for those who use applied ethics in their teaching.

The virtue approach to business ethics is a topic of increasing importance within the business world. Focusing on Aristotle's theory that the virtues of character, rather than actions, are central to ethics, Edwin Hartman introduces readers of this book to the value of applying Aristotle's virtue approach to business. Using numerous real-world examples, he argues that business leaders have good reason to take character seriously when explaining and evaluating individuals in organisations. He demonstrates how the virtue approach can deepen our understanding of business ethics, and how it can contribute to contemporary discussions of character, rationality, corporate culture, ethics education and global ethics. Written by one of the foremost Aristotelian scholars working in the field today, this authoritative introduction to the role of virtue ethics in business is a valuable primer for graduate students and academic researchers in business ethics, applied ethics and philosophy.

"The ethics of the great ethical theorists should apply to the world today including the world of business. In a comprehensive and clear explanation of Aristotle's ethical theory Hartman shows without a doubt the relevance of Aristotle's ethical theory to business." - Norman E Bowie, Professor Emeritus, Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota "A tightly argued book filled with real life examples showing that good character can matter in business and ought to do so. Hartman has hit the golden mean between theory and practice." - Daryl Koehn, Professor, Ethics and Business Law Department, University of St Thomas "What are the implications of Aristotle's

virtue ethics for modern business? This excellent book fills the need for a book-length treatment of this controversial topic by an expert in management theory and business ethics who is also an accomplished Aristotle scholar. Hartman argues persuasively that although Aristotle criticized the businesspeople of his own day, the virtues of character that Aristotle advocated are supportive of modern business organizations and can provide a way of dealing with moral issues in the modern global economy. Hartman also shows how Aristotle's dialectical method for dealing with ethical issues can still play a valuable role in the teaching of business ethics." - Fred D. Miller, Jr, Professor of Philosophy and Executive Director, Social Philosophy and Policy Center, Bowling Green State University"Hartman has provided us with a very accessible primer to Aristotelian virtue ethics. The application to business, both at the individual and organizational levels, offers a critical but productive approach to business and business ethics. This is a book that will repay careful study for student and practitioner alike." - Geoff Moore, Professor of Business Ethics, Durham University Business School, UKAbout the AuthorEdwin M. Hartman was Visiting Professor of Business Ethics and co-director of the Paduano Seminar in Business Ethics at the Stern School of Business, New York University, until his retirement in December 2009. Before joining Stern, he taught for more than twenty years in the business school and the philosophy department at Rutgers University, where he was founding director of the Prudential Business Ethics Center. He is the author of Substance, Body, and Soul: Aristotelian Investigations, Conceptual Foundations of Organization Theory and Organizational Ethics and the Good Life (named Book of the Year (2003) by the Social Issues in Management Division of the Academy of Management).