

Ahmad, you have a real talent for catchy phrases and also for revealing a deep insight. So you may find success as a philosopher and as a writer. And I was very glad to see your "circle" of Freedom, courage, willingness, morality, hard work. If you work on figuring out the logic of that circle then you may get a perfect score on the final and I will be very impressed.

Also, it's good that you are learning about Immanuel Kant. I encourage you to explore more the connection between freedom and courage. A thinker to explore is Paul Tillich (see Wikipedia) and his book "The Courage to Be".

I won't give you too good of a score right now because you've ignored the basics of collecting and presenting real life examples and challenges. So that means that you aren't seeing the reality of your value. For example, a key challenge to freedom is that if you do whatever you want to, then you can do a lot of bad things, you can be completely lazy or selfish, etc. So I challenge you to do better on the final. Andrius

Akash, I congratulate you on your excellent report. You did everything that I wanted you to. It's interesting that you relate self-control to moderation and then I'm glad you bring up the connection to Aristotle and the golden mean. It's very impressive and philosophical how you distinguish self-control of thoughts vs. actions. It's also very important, as you note, to internalize self-control as a "habit" and not have it just be an external influence from others. This will be important as we discuss How we get ourselves to do what we should do.

You argue clearly that dedicating yourself to a goal will guarantee your self-control. But then is perhaps that your true "reason why", dedication towards a goal? You should explore this connection more in your system.

You give only two examples but they are very good and you address them well. Likewise with your challenges and solutions. And I like your personal conclusion, those are very good examples - models, too.

Buddha is also a good source.

I invite you to explore more the modern (as well as ancient) distinction between the unconscious and conscious. In particular, Kahneman's distinction between System 1 (the unconscious) and System 2 (the conscious). You could also consider Freud. And then you could think how your system relates the conscious and the unconscious. I write because you made me wonder, are there good instincts? (As you say, habits.) Do we shape our unconscious? Andrius

Algirdas, I commend you on your excellent report! You did everything that I wanted and I give you a perfect score.

I am especially pleased by your original, thorough, bottom-up (from first principles!) investigation of your fundamental value. You have a basis for a complete ethical system.

Your challenges are very good and you meet them well.

It's interesting how you relate Aristotle and Elon Musk in terms of "first principles". I suggest that you study Aristotle further by looking for a connection between his metaphysics (his "categories") and his ethics. You can likewise look for a connection between Kant's metaphysics (he also has "categories") and his ethics. And you can look for what categories seem to arise in your ethical system. One critique of your investigation is that your value "prosperity" may be an artifice of your method - it is just simply a catch-all "combination" of other values.

You could also analyze Elon Musk's vision of "prosperity" - interplanetary human life. His companies seem to be building different pieces of that puzzle: rockets, tunnels for living underground, electric

transportation for the tunnels, etc. You've done excellent work so I encourage your further imagination. Again, how do you inspire other people to take prosperity seriously? Andrius

Amit, Your strength is that you know your "reason why" and that you have broken it down into three dimensions, and you have concluded nicely about having the right mindset and a strong belief system. Now questions arise: How to figure out the belief system? And what exactly is it? And why are there precisely three dimensions? (What about social, emotional, moral, Divine dimensions, etc.) And you mention three thinkers, of whom only one has any real track record, but you don't detail their teachings and how it relates to your system. Most significantly, you don't consider in detail any real life examples of what you should do, such as what you should be doing at university, at a job, spending your money, being with friends and family. So then you don't show the knowledge that would come from being grounded in real life. And so your thoughts sound questionable, like money that has no backing but is just play money for children who don't know better. In summary, you have a good start and if you come to class you may do very well on the final, but that's in the future. Some thinkers to consider include the Ancient Greeks, who thought about the education of the mind, body and soul:

<http://wn.rsarchive.org/Lectures/GA307/English/RSPC1943/19230806p01.html>

See Plato's Republic, especially Books II and III:

<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html>

Also, you might find meaningful Steven Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Successful People:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_7_Habits_of_Highly_Effective_People

You could also study the Stoics – Stoicism: (See Wikipedia)

<https://www.inc.com/peter-economy/bezos-musk-gates-and-buffett-use-this-ancient-phil.html>

Amit, if you don't come to class there is a chance you could fail the class. I recommend that you come every Tuesday. Andrius

Antoni, Very good. You did an excellent job of relating your value - balance - with survival (the minimum), happiness (the maximum) and self-control (prioritizing their relationship). Your examples are good. And your challenge - how to actually achieve that balance - and your reply - basing it on the particular goal in life you choose - are good. You should pursue that further, considering the various possible goals in life that you or others might have, and how to achieve balance in each case. You should also choose a related philosopher to learn about such as Aristotle (see the Nichomachean Ethics) (I see you mentioned him in your test) or the Stoics. But clearly you have thought a lot about balance. Andrius

Ashwin, Excellent! You did this assignment thoroughly. I appreciate how you personally understand self-control from so many angles of your own life. Your examples and challenges and solutions are very relevant. I suggest you think about how self-control can have you develop yourself in areas of life that may be underdeveloped (or not). For example, you may develop your social life by doing what you do with your studies: choosing small goals, taking small steps, having small successes, and learning as you go along, for example, how to be social without drinking. The learning cycle is key in practical life and evident in your writing. I also suggest that you think about the tensions between the unconscious (our accumulated knowledge and intuition, our self and habits) and our conscious (our

ability to focus on what we don't know - our self control). Kahneman talks about them as system 1 and system 2 and Freud talks about them as well. That is, consider the opposite of self-control and what is its purpose and dynamic. Also, your interest in Buddha is very relevant. What is a text you could study? Andrius

Christian, Excellent! You did the assignment thoroughly and wholeheartedly. You showed what happiness means from different angles and made Aristotle's point of view seem natural, that contemplation is a natural activity for a rational person and thus the ultimate source of happiness. Your examples are good and personal, and your challenges are honest. Your solutions show that your happiness relates to true knowledge of your self. For the final it would be good to explore the degree to which he happiness of each person is related what it takes for unhappy people to become happy. Also, look for texts by Aristotle and Plato that you could read. Andrius

Danielius, You have made a good start but I think there is more you can do to clarify your system. Your "reason why" is morality but, of course, this begs the question, what is morality? and so you need to try to define it. You relate it to some other values but there is a lack of structure. A very good point you make is about the moral compass and the distinction between learning from your mistakes or never learning from them. This is the kind of structural distinction that makes for a very strong and clear system. Also, your study of Kant is very relevant and I encourage you to read more about him and try to read parts of Th Critique of Practical Reason and Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals. But most important is to consider real life examples, which your report lacks. That will give you true insight. I urge you to come to class and participate. Andrius

Joshua, I like how you've presented happiness as an active decision making process. Also, you have a clear definition of happiness as enjoying whatever you're doing. You need to structure a system of values that expands on that. You have some good pieces such as clarity in thinking, breaking goals up into stepping stones, mixing long term and short term activities, goals and rewards. You could study more about time, how to live the moment in both the short term and the long term, what have thinkers said about that. (For example, "Philosophy of space and time") One modern thinker to consider is Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi and his concept of flow and optimal experience. You can see from his work the importance of real life examples, which your report lacks. Buddha is a good thinker but you should also find and study original Buddhist texts that relate to enjoying whatever you're doing. Also, how can you make yourself actually enjoy something like writing an essay or worrying about your family? You also need more and stronger challenges and better solutions although "false sense of security" is good. Andrius

Habib, You have identified your value of survival. And you have thought about it from various points of view. It's good that you've defined it more precisely as flourishing and listed values that are a part of that. But now you should try to structure those values to see how they make up survival as a system. It's good that you distinguish survival as a pre-condition for all values rather than as the most important value as such. So you should explore that relation further. Your example of Socrates, Christ, Gandhi, King, etc. giving up their lives is very important to analyze. I suggest that you study them to see what survival meant for them and how they could justify giving up their lives. It's good that you learned about Spencer but they will probably teach you more regarding your value. Personal development can also be a connection between survival and the other values. I find inspiring your vision of survival - fulfilling needs - enjoying every moment - finding a likeminded partner - creating moments together. Also, do you mean personal survival or survival or anybody and how do you relate yourself and other, which has priority? Personal survival can be a way of learning to care about ourselves so that we could care bout everybody. You need many more real life examples to have a system that is well grounded in reality. Also, war is not really a challenge to the value of survival, but rather challenges include a

comfortable life style where it's not clear what survival means. You need to work on more challenges and solutions. Andrius

Ignas, I'm glad for your personal approach on this subject, and your integrity and insight. A common theme seems to be the freedom to harmonize your freedom with other people's freedom as you think best. Another theme is artificial boundaries that society enforces. Your examples (cookie, class, roof, job) are good and so is your discussion of Camus. You can read more of the existentialists, including Sartre as well. But I think that you could give stronger challenges. One question is how do you decide how to set the limits on your own personal freedom? Another question is how do you know that the rules are not wiser than you? If you are willing to defer to rules, maybe that will have you grow wise in realizing that maybe there are things that you don't know. I suggest you read about Kant and freedom, and the idea of choosing your own rules and following them. I would like to see your values better organized around freedom. I think your example of creating your own freedom by getting a job and earning money is very relevant. Andrius

Ilya, You break down improving society into value very nicely. Freedom -> Self-Development -> Nonviolence. It's important for you to consider not just what we should do to improve society, but also, how improving society relates to everything you should do, including your relationships with family and friends. Your challenge of destructive people is good, but going further in that direction, how do you know that society isn't dysfunctional or hopeless or unimprovable by nature? If it is, then maybe you should just focus on yourself and those around you? Maybe society is how mediocre people oppress the truly noble people? You might read Schopenhauer and Nietzsche to give you ideas to better challenge your question. For example, maybe a consumer society is by nature diseased, and supporting that society just makes it worse? You could look at Marx for such criticism. On the positive side, you could consider Mozi, Mencius and look for thinkers connecting society with freedom and self development, perhaps Adam Smith or Tocqueville. Thank you for participating in class! Andrius

Kapil, You've done what I've wanted you to do. Your discussion of personal development is very much enhanced by your own personal examples and your insights gained. You have identified values in which personal development can be broken up into and now you should explore on what basis to structure them together. For example, there are different ways to think about our "self", what we mean by that, which can include our knowledge, our visceral experience, and our standing in the world. The three-cycle for learning by taking a stand, following through and reflecting is very relevant here. You chose good philosophers, especially Confucius and Aristotle, and you should try to find and read relevant portions from their original works. Also, you can look at Aristotle's metaphysics, and look for what he says about the self and the soul. I like how you describe inner peace as a higher form of happiness. Your challenges are good and your solutions are thoughtful - for balance, you can also read Confucius and Aristotle. As regards your family, spouse and children, you can think about their self development and also your self development in being with them. How might you imagine that? Andrius