Savvy Sunday Salutations:

Welcome to another week with guest blogger Patrick Tulley; last week's discussions were so engaging that Patrick decided to post an addendum this week; it certainly opens up the discussion in more detail. I still believe that honesty is the best policy, what are your thoughts? I hope you find this an interesting read as I have. We look forward to your comments.

(As always, there is a pdf document at the bottom of the post for those who may find this a difficult read.)

**RADICAL HONESTY & RELATIONSHIPS - AN ADDENDUM**

Several commenters’s brought up some interesting points in last week’s post that I thought were worth attaching as an addendum this week. In many ways these points have been reflected in a few of my previous posts, but a little more detail regarding ‘radical honesty’ I felt would be useful in tying them altogether more coherently. What’s interesting is that this addendum is now longer than my original post. Anyway, I hope it explains any discrepancies that you may have had with last week’s post.

1 – Obligations

‘Honesty is the best policy’

We have all heard the expression above, but what is it suggesting? Well for the most part it is saying honesty by definition is a virtuous act. But is it really? Cannot dishonesty be virtuous too? In order for a philosophical concept to work, it is first required to be consistent. I believe I can prove this from a philosophical perspective myself. This is also, where we touch on the more ethical nature of our choices to be honest or not. I hope it makes sense.

Honesty accepts that you have an obligation to be honest. However, the obligations we are faced with may well have been either ‘unchosen’ or a ‘chosen’ one. There is an important distinction between them in order for us to best understand our decision whether to be honest or dishonest.

**Negative Unchosen Obligation**

Much like the analogy, I made with the murderer and my story about skipping school. Both parties are faced with an obligation to be honest that was forced upon them. The murderer demands to know where your wife is so he can commit an act of violence against someone you love. Sending the murderer in the opposite direction would be considered both dishonest and virtuous simultaneously, insofar as you would be averting an act of violence against another. Unless the murderer is directly threatening the husband, then it would be hard to accept their decision to tell the truth as virtuous, if they sent him the correct way.

Regarding my choice to lie about skipping school, whilst it may share some similarities with the murderer analogy, there are some core differences. Firstly, I was forced to go to school, whether I wanted to or not. The obligation was imposed on me from the start. My choice whether I went to school or not cannot be considered either as virtuous or un-virtuous, since
this would be merely my preference in deciding whether I went to school or not. However, when I chose to lie about my whereabouts that day in order to stave off some physical punishment, my dishonesty can be viewed as a virtuous act. Why? Well, whilst I have no positive obligation to go to school, other than my fear of punishment, my dishonesty averted a violent act against me. Wherever coercion is being applied to oblige us to tell the truth then there is nothing virtuous in telling them the truth. The person coercing us into truth telling is nothing more than a mugger demanding our wallet.

**Positive Chosen Obligation**

These are the obligations that we choose for ourselves. They are obligations for which responsibilities are placed upon us by choice. The important difference to the previous obligation is that we ‘choose’ these responsibilities; they are not forced upon us. If I choose to work for an employer and decide to skip a day from work without informing them, then they have a right to ask me where I was, since we both agreed to my coming into work at a certain time. Whilst I could lie and say, I was lost at sea or in an accident unable to reach them by phone. My decision to lie can be viewed as un-virtuous, since I decided to lie about something I had positively chosen to abide by. If I tell my employer the truth that I just didn’t feel like coming in and my employer decides to fire me, then he is perfectly within his rights according to the contract we both agreed to. It would be their choice, since I was the one that broke the agreement. Similarly, as one of last week’s commenter’s suggested, if I elect to own a pet, then I am obliged to feed it and give them some ability to exercise. If I decide to not feed that animal, then I am responsible for its subsequent dying of hunger.

**Children**

Perhaps the most important positive obligation we can give ourselves is to have children. This subject probably deserves a whole blog post of its own, but I will attempt to condense it for this particular post. Our relationship with our children whilst entirely chosen by the parent is an unchosen one for the child. We’ve all heard a teenager complain to a parent, ‘I never chose to be born’. Well, it’s true, they didn’t. Perhaps they would have preferred some other persons to be their parents. This means that parents have a special responsibility to their children, insofar as they need to recognise their children’s 'unchosen' obligation to them. It requires an exceptional kind of care that you may not apply to other relationships in your life. This is because they are very vulnerable for at least the first 16 to 18 years of their life and wholly reliant on the parent to protect them. This relationship effectively trumps all others because of this unique responsibility.

**2 – Appropriate honesty**

This was an interesting question raised in last week’s comments thread. It raised the issue of how much honesty should we give a person at the beginning of a relationship. Opening up the most vulnerable parts about yourself can be viewed as inappropriate before levels of realistic trust have been formed between them. I completely agree with this, but I wouldn’t suggest that this kind of honesty was ‘radical’; it merely reflects a dysfunction in that person and most likely a display of ‘un-met’ needs, which I will come to in a moment. Radical honesty is about understanding your own feelings as much as the other. It requires empathic skills to decide whether this new person is actually worthy of your complete honesty. For instance if I decide to engage with someone I have knowingly seen to be aggressive and irrational and I
express some doubts about their behaviour, then I am likely to experience some great hostility from them. Likewise, if I decide to share my most innermost thoughts with someone I only just met, I can hardly be surprised if they then go and tell others about them. These are all signs of a lack of empathy, which probably stem from neglect that some of us experienced as children. Honesty is risky and should only be shared with those that have proved themselves to be trustworthy.

**Un-met Needs**

These are needs that children desire as they grow up, such as care, empathy, understanding and truth. If some of these were missing in your childhood, then it’s highly likely you will look for people that mirrored your experience as a child; in the unconscious hope they will finally meet those needs for you. Generally this often means you approach relationship building in a dysfunctional way and rather than having those un-met needs being satisfied, they are often more likely to be compounded further.

**3 – Culture**

I touched on this two weeks ago in *Relationships, Friendship & Attraction*. There are a lot of myths that surrounds how we approach our relationships and indeed how we hold onto them. We have all seen the endless movies with the guy getting the girl at the very end against all adversity. Culture has endless quotes that seemingly show relationships as this kind of fantastical adventure.

*Love will conquer all*

*Unconditional love*

*Friendship is forever*

*Soul mate*

Love is often given some mythological status, as if it doesn’t really require any earning and is found more by luck than by judgement. Often these cultural references only serve to hinder and compound dysfunctional behaviour in us. This is why as a philosopher I am always wary of culture and which is why you should be also.

There is a lot more I could say on this subject and indeed, I will in the weeks to come. What constitutes a healthy relationship I feel are generally our ‘shared values’. What those values are exactly I will certainly be discussing in a later post. For now I hope that both this week and last week’s post go a long way into giving you a better understanding of what I have described as ‘radical honesty’. I would also like to thank Joey, Ozlem and Lori for their contribution to this week’s post. As always, the very best of luck to you all.
Free PDF of Real-Time Relationships

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Thoughts and comments are encouraged as always.

Pdf document: Radical Honesty & Relationships

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My name is Patrick Tulley. I am primarily a philosopher and an amateur writer but also have been a painter and sculptor in the past. My background has been quite varied, as I have lived abroad on and off during my 20's, been in a number of different professions throughout my life. More recently, I have been working as a private consultant within the public sector.

Since philosophy is my preferred interest; it is always something I rigorously apply to all my thinking and writing. Whilst I am knowledgeable about abstract philosophy, I am not particularly interested in taking that route. Philosophy is about the search for truth, it was always meant to be understandable by everyday people -this does not mean dumbing down the ideas of course. It just means I do not allow myself to get sidetracked by too many inconsequential arguments, often referred to as lifeboat scenarios. I tend towards the more Aristotelian and Socratic methods of philosophy, but I also have interests in Hume, Nietzsche and Rand. Philosophy has been a wonderful and fulfilling part of my life; it’s often been a very misunderstood subject -which I hope to discuss in future posts. I also enjoy reviewing art, literature, music and passing comments on culture, news and personal experiences that I have found both interesting and enlightening. I do not have a particular interest in politics – however; I may discuss my reasons with you sporadically throughout this blog. Overall, this is hoped to be a journal about a philosophical life. I hope you will enjoy my outlook on things and look forward to hearing your comments and thoughts along the way. I would also like to thank Ozlem for giving me this opportunity to have a voice on her blog.

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Disclaimer; whilst we (guest bloggers and I) do not set about to intentionally upset visitors to the site; I understand some of the topics discussed/raised may touch nerves. Please note I will do my utmost to screen these posts before I post them however; I do believe in freedom of speech and I would hate to limit someone because they think differently to me or have different values from mine. Therefore, I urge you to have some understanding and an open mind before jumping in and causing a scene without it being constructive. Like I said, Patrick and I do have difference of opinions and on most cases we agree to disagree but at the same time we also respect the others’ thoughts and views -after all we do live in a civilized world; with this in mind I hope we will have more cultivated and engaging discussions. One last note to all: Here on yikici I have aimed to keep posts and discussions clean; I am not a fan of words that are disrespectful and disparaging therefore, I will not condone its’ use here on yikici; I do hope you share my views on this –if not, at least can respect them.

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Thoughts and comments are encouraged as always.