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A summary of and a phenomenological study on ethics within the project management practitioner community

Ahmed Abu Al Shaikh



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

Faculty of Technology

Visiting address:
Ångströmlaboratoriet
Lägerhyddsvägen 1

Postal address:
Box 536
751 21 Uppsala

Telephone:
+46 (0)18 – 471 30 03

Telefax:
+46 (0)18 – 471 30 00

Web page:
<http://www.teknik.uu.se/education/>

Abstract

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Project managers typically work under constant and strict time, money and quality pressures which can, alongside other factors, lead to professional ethics within the project environment taking a backseat. This paper provides an overview on ethics; project management and ethics within project management with focus on the conventional vs. alternative deliberations taking place in this field of study. Fixed codes of ethics; rationalist-derived standards which are imposed on the field vs. Aristotelian (and other accounts of) virtue ethics are covered. The paper also provides an account of the epistemological shift that has been deemed necessary due to the existential disruptions being caused by the rising rates of failure in projects across multiple industries under the conventional metalanguage: from a natural sciences perspective toward a more existentially-derived phenomenological attitude in the hopes of coming to a better theoretical and practical understanding of project management. The paper finally utilizes a phenomenological analysis methodology after interviewing seven experienced project managers working in different fields while summarizing the two splits present throughout the paper in a Dreyfusian-helped Coeckelberghian framework: with the ultimate aim of seeing how the phenomena of ethics are being experienced from within the project management practitioner world.

Supervisor: prof. Åse Linné
Subject reader: prof. Thomas Lennerfors
Examiner: prof. David Sköld
SAMINT-MILI-21049
Printed by: Uppsala Universitet

Popular Science Summary

This paper, in a most general sense, is on the topic of professional ethics (or applied morality within a profession). In general, people who are interested in ethics such as ethics researchers, authors, philosophers and even behavioral psychologists are interested in two things: To understand the systems of values, norms, habits which guide the behaviors of their subjects (or perhaps of humanity in general). And secondly and more ambitiously, to perhaps either criticize or rationalize some of the existing ways of how ethical decisions are being made; or to even conceptualize new ways for their subjects to think about and resolve moral dilemmas. This paper despite borrowing heavily from ethicists, philosophers, researchers and behaviorists that are speaking on a universal level as such focuses specifically on the world of project management. Projects, in a conventional sense, are known for being governed by the infamous Time – Quality – Money triangle, and are known to be temporary in nature. In a typical corporate environment (as opposed to purely project-based firms, which do exist), we typically have something that is known as a matrix organization called upon when some temporary project work is required. Under this format, the project manager and her project team are typically assembled from different departments within the organization and asked to do some time, scope and money-sensitive task in a specified period of time. The project managers working in this typical arrangement are usually subordinate to, and heavily dependent upon the managers in the mother company (typically called the line organization) for resources, material and workers. As the paper unfolds we will see why this arrangement and why the field of project management in particular calls for a closer look when it concerns ethics. For starters, these project managers are under immense and constant pressures from different parties both internal and external (known as stakeholders) to bring costs to a minimum; to never miss a deadline; all while upholding rigorous quality standards no matter what. It does not require a massive stretch in imagination to see why working in an environment like this can lead to the possibility of ethics taking a backseat.

International firms have always known about the importance of studying and applying ethics (especially as it concerns corruption and fraud) but it seems that it has taken a while for the project management industry to catch up and to start verbalizing its own unique perspective on the topic. In recent years, there has been a growing community of passionate authors and researchers who have honed in on both the importance of ethics within project management, and the type of ethics that should be conceptualized and practiced within this field. And there is much more to the story, as even the words “ethics” and “project management” are not quite the simple terms they seem at first glance. When it comes to ethics, and as the paper unfolds, you will see how authors like Ljungblom and Lennerfors, Bredillet and Kliem describe these ethics in different terms or as falling under different schools of thought – which will eventually be boiled down into two splits: basically the sphere of convention against the alternative sphere. You will see terms like standards, codes of ethics and virtue ethics explained and contrasted; and even read thoughts from modern authors on ancient and classical philosophies like the Aristotelian and Platonic schools, and even Taoism and the Roman Stoics.

And when it comes to project management, you will find that same theme of the few passionate authors who are writing about the field, or encouraging people to see the field from an alternative perspective. Such authors are fed up with what they term the “conventional metalanguage” (think of the project management industry and governing bodies) as they feel that it is failing to encapsulate the true nature of what it means to manage projects. They point to the evidence that projects world-wide, and across multiple fields like construction and software development are now more and more failing to meet cost, time and quality objectives. They encourage us to let go of our rigid conceptualizations

of project management from the purely normative; scientific; quantifiable lenses that are typically used when both practicing, and studying the field. They instead want us to get at the “lived experience” of the project manager herself: to put ourselves in her shoes as she immerses herself in her day-to-day tasks in order to arrive at both better theoretical and practical understandings of the field. This is because, by closely examining the practitioner’s actual experiences, we can arrive at a realistic and deep understanding of the complex and social processes that go on at various levels of project work. Some of these authors utilize works from existentialist philosophers like Heidegger to explain their frameworks and to help us see how this alternative way of viewing the meta can really be the way to move forward in the study and practice of project management; after the obvious failings of the status-quo to achieve these goals.

After all of this exploration and in order to study how these ideas work in the real world i.e. how project managers working in different industries think about and actually apply ethics within their respective worlds, a phenomenological approach is utilized (based on the advice of the aforementioned authors). I found the writings of two particular thinkers (Dreyfus and Coeckelbergh) to be especially helpful here as they provided me with the packaged framework I needed to formulate my strategy for studying these project managers’ experiences. These two writers did not study ethics or project management specifically, but rather explored many concepts, theories and angles of approach (like experience; tacit knowledge; instruction; anti-cognitivism...) from previous researchers and philosophers with the aim of tying our very moral character with our competence in our day-to-day activities, and also how all of this interplays with our embodied relationships with the tools, colleagues and mentors in our workplace. They also arrive at a convention vs. alternative split when it comes to these matters, and confirm the need to get at the lived experience of the moral subject in order to really understand what is going on (also using existentialist philosophy as a tool). This, in their opinion, is much more in line with how our sense of morality, and the coping we daily exhibit in tandem with our ethical frameworks grow and change with geography and time; contexts and landscapes. This is presented in opposition to design mentality where we try to design a perfect moral code, once and for all, for ourselves and others, which is seen as detached and inapplicable. I use these ideas, and others from thinkers like Lennerfors and Bredillet, with the ultimate aim of coming to a realistic, on-the-ground understanding of the lived experience of these project managers as it pertains to the application of ethics within their day-to-day dealing with the tools and stakeholders of the project world.

For Farid

for those who live with love

For Lovisa

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I. Introduction

The topic of ethics within project management is one that has been neglected but slowly gaining in popularity in recent years. Despite the number of memberships and certifications being handed out by the governing bodies of this industry (e.g. the Project Management Institute; International Project Management Association) being continually on the rise, mainstream research on the field such as Ljungblom and Lennerfors (2018) states that ethics remain a “relatively neglected issue”. This was not lost on authors back at the turn of the century: Loo (2001) noted that project management books like Gido and Clements (1999) and Cleland and King (1998) tend to not address ethics at all, and when they do, they do so in passing. In recent years, there has been a tangible rise on this focus: evident in the publishing of dedicated books like Kliem’s *Ethics and Project Management* (2012). Not only that, but now there also exists a small yet dedicated community of likeminded researchers who see the importance of studying ethics within project management. It seems that multinational firms have long understood the importance of (business) ethics within the corporate environment and in their dealings with external stakeholders (Robertson and Fadil, 1999); but it took a while for the project management industry to catch up and to verbalize its unique perspectives on the topic. Within that community of authors, there also seems to be a consensus toward a tangible opposition against normative applied ethics, in the form of standards or codes of ethics or conduct and such, as dictated by the governing bodies of project management. To put it succinctly, these authors propose alternatives to the standardized codes of ethics and conduct being presented by organizations like the Project Management Institute, the International Project Management Association and the Association for Project Management (PMI, IPMA and APM for short; respectively). These alternatives can be placed under the umbrella term of “virtue ethics”. During the first section of this paper (Main Theory part I), the reader will be presented with the pertinent definitions; why ethics are important to study in a context like project management; and an account of the core arguments at the heart of that normative vs. alternative split mentioned above.

The second major topic that will be covered in this paper is the epistemological debates taking place with regard to the field of project management (both in study and practice). Cicmil et al. (2006) is one of the first examples on papers that illuminated the necessity for a shift from a positivistic stance toward, what they termed at the time, “actuality research”. Simply put, such papers want us to closely examine the practitioners’ actual experiences with project work in order to arrive at a realistic and deep understanding of the complex and social processes that go on at various levels of project work. Back in 2006, when Cicmil et al. published their paper, and in other similar works like Cicmil (2006) and Cicmil and Hodgson (2006b), they would refer to such an epistemological shift as a “controversial position”. However, in the years that followed, and just like with the above-mentioned shift toward virtue ethics, there now exists a community of small but passionate authors who are pushing for this epistemological shift from “positivism; natural science lens; being” toward “interpretivism; lived experience lens; becoming”. To put it in simple terms, papers like Rolfe et al. (2016) argue that the increasing rates of failure in project work across multiple industries can no longer be thought of as happening *despite*, but *due to* the rigid and formulaic conceptualization of the project management practice under the conventional meta. They instead, using existentialist philosophy (e.g. Heidegger’s destruction of the Cartesian dualism), and analytic philosophers like Alasdair MacIntyre and Thomas Kuhn, push for getting at the *lived experience* of the project manager *from within* the community of practitioners. A detailed account of this epistemological shift is presented in the second section of the paper (Main Theory part II).

This paper has two main research aims. The first is to provide an account of the pertinent definitions and concepts relating to ethics within project management; and why project management is in particular need of study when it comes to ethics. This coverage naturally extends to the big debate on normative vs. alternative ethical frameworks: in the form of codes of ethics and conduct; deontological/consequentialist-derived standards; minimalism... vs. virtue ethics; Phronesis; maximalism... (building on Aristotelian gnoseology) from papers like Bredillet (2010; 2014), Bredillet et al. (2014), Eikeland (2008; 2012), Lennerfors (2013) and Ljungblom and Lennerfors (2018). Also some alternative virtue ethics coverage is provided: from the Roman Stoics in books like Aurelius (1890), Epictetus (1955), and Seneca (1932). All of this in Main Theory part I.

Still under the first research aim, and from an epistemological standpoint: coverage is provided of why the angle of approach of the conventional metalanguage has failed to encapsulate the nature of the project management practice, evident in project failures in multiple fields being on the rise – and how a shift from (conventional) positivism; measurement; the natural sciences' view; being... toward (alternative) phenomenology; hermeneutics; ironism; becoming... building upon existentialist philosophy e.g. Heidegger can take us much further toward understanding project management, for both theoretical and practical needs. Papers like Rolfe et al. (2016), van der Hoorn and Whitty (2015), Linehan and Kavanagh (2006), Bloch et al. (2012), Cicmil and Hodgson (2006b), Koskela and Howell (2008)...; deriving from works like Heidegger (1962), MacIntyre (1985; 1988), Rorty (1989) and Kuhn (1996) are covered in Main Theory part II.

The first research aim, which ultimately materializes as the summary of the above-mentioned topics (presented in Main Theory parts I and II) serves two purposes. The first is to provide future researchers wanting to study ethics within project management with a summarized, up-to-date account on the latest deliberations within this field. It also aims to highlight the clear conventional vs. alternative split within the field, and that stretches throughout the paper. As the paper unfolds, the reader will see how these proposed alternative schools of thought as it pertains to the application ethics (in the form of Aristotelian virtue ethics for example) synergize with the need for the epistemological shift toward getting at the lived experience of the project manager.

What is interesting is that the aforementioned necessity for a shift from positivism toward interpretivism in general, or some kind of phenomenological approach in particular, to study the lived experience of the project management practitioner to arrive at a deeper and more realistic understanding of his or her experiences (with applied ethics or otherwise) has been discussed and theorized about in many works such as Cicmil (2006); Cicmil et al. (2006); Cicmil and Hodgson (2006b); Ljungblom and Lennerfors (2018); van der Hoorn and Whitty (2015); Rolfe et al. (2016). And yet a pure phenomenological analysis approach on data gathered from practitioners has never been put into practice. Ljungblom and Lennerfors (2018) for instance, in line with the seminal Loo (2001), approached 88 project management students and 31 practitioners with three ethical dilemmas in order to study their conceptualization and application of virtue ethics. The responses to these dilemmas lead the researchers to assign them under one of three “vignettes”. Despite this being a creative inductive qualitative approach that shifts the epistemological compass away from pure positivism, it is still admittedly not after the lived experience of the practitioner as such. And it is precisely this potential gap that spells the main reasoning behind this paper.

The second research aim then is to perform a phenomenological analysis on data gathered from current practitioners. I do this by developing a theoretical framework that culminates in Stuart Dreyfus and Mark Coeckelbergh's writings: more specifically Dreyfus (1975; 1980; 2002a; 2005), Dreyfus and Dreyfus

(1980a; 1991) and ultimately, Coeckelbergh (2012; 2013; 2013a; 2018) and his contributions in Cropley et al. (2014), in Main Theory part III.

Coeckelbergh (building on Dreyfus' "skillful coping") was not targeting project management specifically with his writings. Rather, he was interested in developing a holistic framework of morality which aims to explore concepts like pragmatism; anti-cognitivism; anti-instruction; experience; engagement with the material; handling; tacit knowledge, with the ultimate goal of conceptualizing a day-to-day, natural relationship between virtue and competence i.e. practice as virtue; virtue as skilled engagement, which takes into account the present (and always social) context of the moral agent. Coeckelbergh also called for a phenomenological "real-world" study of these concepts, and wanted to contrast this sphere with what he terms the "Platonic school" i.e. the top-down design mentality of set codes of moral conduct i.e. "morality as design". Coeckelbergh not only wants his framework to be on the pragmatic and the natural, but also the "social". He elaborates on how "moral improvement" should always be thought of as collaborative within the work space, and how interacting with the surrounding tools and actors of our specific work space will result in "know-how" that is unique to us vis-à-vis the specific context/world – having interacted with these specific elements. Moral creativity and moral change then to Coeckelbergh (in line with Aristotelian virtue ethics; Heideggerian phenomenology etc.) are always thought of in terms of "growth; cultivation" and as always being dynamically shaped by the moral; technological; societal landscapes of our geography and time (and by the continuously changing character of the moral agent). In opposition to the epistemology of what he terms "theoretical science": where there exists a "moral super-agent" that is perfectly rational and that knows precisely what is reasonable for every circumstance, and so goes about "designing; implementing" a universal, rationalist code from the "top-down".

After developing the theoretical framework in Main Theory, a phenomenological approach is adopted with the aim of arriving at the lived experience of seven experienced project managers working in different fields and environments as it pertains to their application of ethics. The Research Question to be investigated (and which encapsulates the phenomenological ambitions of the paper) is:

"How do ethics permeate the lived experience of the modern^μ project manager?"

The Hycner (1985) fifteen-step phenomenological analysis methodology is used. Its aversion to blind adherence to theory; instead aiming at finding the most apt way of describing the studied phenomenon for what it is, with the least amount of dilution of the unique human experience being its main strength and a perfect match for this paper. Though the research approach can technically be classified as deductive, the researcher was not in pursuit of proving or disproving authors like Bredillet or Coeckelbergh, it is just that their concepts, frameworks and terminology were the most apt way to describe the phenomenon of ethics within project management, with the least amount of dilution of the unique experiences of the respondents. Kliem (2012) when investigating ethics within project management does so under the umbrella of a series of overarching questions which the researcher found to be excellent pointers toward the Research Question, and in designing the interview questions. Especially these four: What exactly is "ethics" to these project managers i.e. how do they define it? How important is ethics in the context of project management? Where in the project lifecycle is ethics considered most needed? What are the main factors that affect the propagation and type of ethics being applied in project management?

^μ: Modern project environments as described in Berggren et al. (2001), covered on page 49

II. Main Theory

II-1 part I: Ethics, Virtue and Virtue Ethics

Ethics in Project Management

When it comes to the topic of ethics, or on a more general level, applied morality within project management, we seemingly run into an immediate roadblock in the form of lack of coverage in the mainstream literature. This lack of coverage becomes even more apparent once one visits what little literature there exists on the topic. By referring to a textbook example: Ljungblom and Lennerfors (2018), a paper which attempts to empirically investigate applied virtue ethics as it concerns project managers and project management students, we find that the authors stress this lack of coverage right out of the gate – in spite of project management becoming “omnipresent” with more and more people identifying themselves as project managers. The authors note that ethics is “still a relatively neglected issue” and that they believe it to be crucial to include ethics in the future research and practice of project management. The good news however is that what little literature exists on the topic is being generated by a community of passionate authors presenting solid arguments and alternative schools of thought, each with their own end goals. One of the most prolific authors in this vein is Christophe Bredillet of Queensland University of Technology fame: In his two most popular works Bredillet (2014) and Bredillet et al. (2014), he aims to introduce Aristotelian philosophy as an alternative to the standardized applied ethics frameworks of which most project management practitioners find themselves a part. These frameworks are basically rooted in deontologist or utilitarian approaches (depending on which project management handbook you choose to follow) which in Bredillet’s mind contain internal contradictions as well as “ethical tensions” (e.g. between “means” and “ends”). And to this end, Bredillet wants to present a more inclusive solution that comes to him in the form of Aristotelian virtue ethics, as the “bridge” (between means and ends; theory and practice etc.) I will expound much more on the content of papers such as those, but for now I wish to turn to Ralph L. Kliem’s 2012 book, *Ethics and Project Management*: which can be described as a presentation of ethics within project management that is more normative, or in line with the current standards and practices of the project management governing bodies (e.g. IPMA; PMI...) in order to gain a holistic overview of the field. In this book, critical questions such as “Why ethics should matter to project managers?” and “How do ethics permeate the entire project life cycle?” are tackled – with a sharp focus on the Project Management Code of Ethics (and its strengths and failings) as well as the unique trends and specific challenges that project managers, in particular, face on a daily basis. There exist other excellent sources that aim to provide holistic coverage on professional ethics, such as Lennerfors (2019), but the latter touches upon different schools of ethics in a more general sense; while the former is particularly focused on project management practitioners.

To begin, let us focus on providing definitions for ethics. Like Kliem (2012), I will present multiple definitions that I feel encapsulate (or at least relate to) the issues at hand:

- From Desjardins (2006, p. 3): “Ethics refers to a systematic study of the norms and values that guide how humans should live their lives.”
- From Lennerfors (2019, p. 13): “Ethics is about how one should live one’s life, what is good, what is the right way to act, and what one should do.”

- From Schinzinger and Martin (2000, p.8): “It [Ethics] is the activity of understanding moral values, resolving moral issues, and justifying moral judgments. It is also the discipline or area of study resulting from that activity.”

From these definitions we can arrive at some overarching “characteristics” (as Kliem puts it) that ethics, in general, includes or wants to address (Kliem, 2012, p. 2). Such as:

- Discernment (or “Determining good from bad” as Kliem phrases it): When a particular situation arises, a project manager/team member will ostensibly choose “right” or “wrong”. Discernment and deliberation are the two core steps in the Aristotelian process as we shall see in future parts.
- Judgment, and determining the appropriate response to a given situation: The former relates to the PM having to make decisions about ethical situations (whether to take action and to what degree). The latter is more in line with the PM wisely choosing “an appropriate response” in order to resolve an issue. This is tied closely to judgment and discernment; and requires “wrestling” with virtues like fairness, integrity, objectivity, honesty, appropriateness etc.
- Behavior: It is Kliem’s imperative (as well as the other authors that we will cover) that ethical beliefs are “exhibited values” which are reflected through action. In other words, these (ethical) beliefs and values are influencing behavior, and not just existing in a cognitive vacuum. I will elaborate much on this as the paper unfolds. Kliem (2012) and Helgado´tir (2008) uniquely highlight the team aspect of these behaviors: that is, the project manager “reflects ethics” with her team members in the way she and those others make decisions and then put them into action. (E.g. whether an ethical decision is made democratically or unilaterally.)
- Ethical situations: which vary in level of complexity e.g. giving a verbal warning to a colleague for using the copier for personal documents vs. dealing with suspected insider trading.

Kliem makes the argument that project managers are particularly impacted by unique and immense pressures. PMs are expected to reduce costs, to meet constant and aggressive deadlines and to uphold rigorous quality standards no matter what – all of which can lead to ethics taking a backseat. And Kliem uniquely presents a holistic argument for the importance of studying ethics for this field, and he does so by presenting some infamous “misconceptions” and addressing those; instead of just listing the reasons for why ethics is important. Some notable examples are: the misperception that ethics has no bottom-line value which Kliem particularly refers to as “hard to fathom”. Negating it with the argument that ethics provides both “tangible” and “intangible” value. The former by providing us with a framework for making decisions – especially when we are presented with a high level of complexity; allowing project managers who demonstrate a high level of ethical awareness to deal with the “gray areas” of ethical situations (when right from wrong is unclear). The latter by the simple fact that a demonstrable neglect of ethical considerations can lead to very tangible negative consequences for the firm, such as potential disbarment from future contracts and the mounting of civil and criminal fines on both individuals within the firm, and the firms themselves. Not only that, but Kliem avers that ethics leads to tangible benefits to the firm in the form of “greater profits”; as well as tangible benefits to the project team in the form of greater “information sharing” and “collaboration” among team members – insisting that a neglect of ethics can directly and indirectly lead to slipped schedules, poor quality of output, and exceeding the budget. (Kliem, 2012, p. 4)

Another crucial misconception is that ethics is a “stand-alone topic”. Kliem (and as we will see, Bredillet) argues that one cannot divorce ethics from things like risk management, time-management, cost management, or any (other) topic related to project management. Kliem states that project managers “must” and often without realizing it incorporate ethics in their decision-making. Another important misconception, and potential tie I would like to introduce between Kliem, Bredillet and Ljungblom and Lennerfors (2018) is that ethics involves “only compliance”. That is when transgressions against laws and regulations happen, fines and penalties follow, and things like PR can become a disaster for the firm. Compliance however is only a “sliver” of the complex topic that is ethics, Kliem continues. And this perfectly complements Ljungblom and Lennerfors’ “minimalistic” thinker, which I will cover soon. “Ethics” more holistically cover things like character, integrity, honesty, fairness, trust etc. This description by Kliem can serve as a simple introduction into virtue ethics in opposition to blind adherence to codes or standards as described by Bredillet’s body of work and papers like Lennerfors (2013) and Ljungblom and Lennerfors (2018). We should pay attention to ethics not simply out of fear or for a mere desire to be in compliance, but because one unethical decision can affect how the team works together; its quality of output; its treatment of the customer etc. In short, it will have reverberating consequences throughout the project lifecycle (and for the firm).

And crucially, Kliem wants to destroy the misconception that ethics is only meant to deal with matters that are black and white in nature: saying that if that were the case, then ethics would be a “no-brainer”. Project managers almost always deal with “gray issues”, and ethics are primarily meant to deal with gray issues i.e. ones where the correct decisions or actions are not black and white and the consequences are largely unknown (Kliem, 2012, p. 6). As an example, a project manager needs to maintain a good relationship with a certain vendor who is demanding a certain level of information access to be able to service the project; and the PM is uncertain on how much information she can share with this vendor without breaking intellectual capital requirements. A balance is required, and ethics is called upon.

To summarize Kliem’s writings on the angle of why ethics is important to project managers in particular: it is precisely because project work is “unique” (in an age of “specialization”). Project managers are surrounded by people with a narrow disciplinary focus; while by contrast, they must have a broad perspective. They daily deal with a plethora of stakeholders spanning a “wide spectrum” from security to marketing to information systems and finance... and this unique set of circumstances can cause ethical dilemmas to occur quickly and frequently (Kliem, 2012, pp. 21-22). A few examples to highlight this:

- Executives within the firm, due to their direct control over the project team’s agenda and resources, can be more powerful than the customers. This can pressure the project manager or the team to put the customer’s interests aside despite the customer paying for the project.
- Team members may get too familiar with certain suppliers – weakening objectivity, increasing needless dependence, and increasing the chances of conflicts of interest.
- Project managers may have “responsibility” without “commensurate authority” which is often the case in a matrix organization (unless they are lucky enough to be part of a purely projectized environment with functional command over resources, which is stressed by Kliem to be a “rare circumstance”). When the PM relies on the line organization for financial or “in-kind” support: this can lead to pressure, which can translate into “mischarging” or moving the project along (despite requirements for certain phases not being met) rather than adhering to established policies.

- Project managers, by definition, must achieve results in a relatively constrained period of time leading to “immense pressure” than can lead to potential cutting of corners, “quick fixes”, and reductions in quality at the expense of the customer or the public. What is more, though the project may be short-term, many of the decisions can have long-term consequences. So a decision to change scope will likely have an impact throughout the supply chain at one time or another, even if it goes under change control.
- Kliem, in line with Pryke (2017) (to be covered when discussing the “social networks” view of project management) stresses the temporary nature of the relationships being formed coming into the project. And because of that “impermanence”, team members may feel that the consequences of their actions do not matter as much (akin to allowing oneself to litter in a different neighborhood than one’s own). (Kliem, 2012, p. 101)
- Project managers usually work in different environments within business or technical fields; and what may be permissible or acceptable in one environment may not be so in another (even within the same organization). And things like management styles, corporate culture, and “ways of doing business” can vary wildly from one field to another – leading to the possibility of inadvertent ethical transgression through misinterpretation or miscalculation.

It is imperative to note that while Kliem does present a few “downsides” to adhering to a code of ethics (listed in the next paragraph); the concepts and the arguments in the book are presented either in reference to, or in congruence with the Project Management Code of Ethics – hence the “normative” categorization by me. The reasoning provided by the author is that a code provides a structure that all people in the profession can use to make decisions; offers the potential for a common language (from a disciplinary standpoint i.e. whichever language you speak, the terms used in the code of ethics have a similar meaning with some differences in interpretation); provides a sense of community among people within a discipline and so “keeps the profession alive” therefore enabling “the transfer of principles...from one generation of members of a discipline to the next” (Kliem, 2012, p. 48). In other words, it provides continuity in dealing with issues in a way that capitalizes on the acceptable standards and guidelines of our times.

Kliem to his credit does provide some counterarguments. He argues that adhering to a code of ethics can foster rigidity of thought hindering the propagation of “new knowledge” in the profession (in the next part, we will see how Heidegger’s “DasMan” is conceptualized in this vein). It can cause adherents to interpret principles simply as “the law” – suspending their own judgment; and thereby availing themselves of responsibility (and personal liability). Or, in dire cases, serve as an excuse to do something ironically unethical. He notes that the project management codes of ethics often contain principles and terminology that are often so contradictory and vague that they can be used to justify anything allowing professionals to make their own interpretations, and provide justification for whatever actions they wanted to take anyway.

Ultimately, Kliem wants to assert that, while important to have, a code of ethics should not replace judgment either on an individual or group level.

This I think serves as a perfect introduction into Bredillet’s body of work as, by his own description, and as a minimum, he would like to see the codes of ethics and professional conduct for project managers “redesigned” or at least “revisited”. He proposes we do this not in accordance with any modernist or post-modernist ethical paradigms as this, itself, leads to “dichotomous thinking” (rather than seeing the merit

and validity of both sides). Rather, he proposes Aristotelian ethics as the way to move beyond this dichotomous thinking. The author elaborates generously on Aristotelian gnoseology building on the previous work of Eikeland, particularly (2008; 2012), in order to make his case.

The main problem, to Bredillet's mind, is that the two most widely accepted codes of ethics: that is the PMI and the APM codes of ethics and professional conduct represent two sides of a very problematic coin. To start with, the PMI code of ethics, a "standard" which adhered to the American National Standard Institute processes for its development, is built upon four core values: "responsibility, respect, fairness and honesty" (PMI, 2021). And in order to uphold these values, the standard prescribes "expectation[s] of conduct" (for the community of "practitioners" as "professionals"); as well as "mandatory conduct" (these are firm requirements). And each value, Bredillet notes, is related to "our duty as practitioners". And the decisions to be made, in accordance with this standard, shall be so for the sake of the best interest of society, public safety and environment. By turning to books like Lennerfors (2019), or papers like Schick and Vaughn (1999), we find that "Deontology" (rooted in Greek *deon*: "duty") is characterized by "universability" (as in everyone can act on it) and "reversibility" (i.e. the person acting on it would be willing to have everyone else act on it). Bredillet continues down this line of argumentation by asserting that PMI practitioners are acting in adherence to principles which are "aiming at 'universability'" (giving the example of the use of terminology like "the global project management community" in the document); and reversibility i.e. the PMI practitioners are addressing and acting towards themselves. This leads Bredillet to classify the PMI code as rooted in deontology. He uses similar logic (after studying the text within the code) to apply the classification of "Consequentialism" to the APM code of ethics (asserting that consequentialist ethics can be seen as "utilitarianism" i.e. "the philosophy of the greatest good for the greatest number") as defined by Harrison (2004, p. 2); a definition also in line with professional-oriented books like Lennerfors (2019).

Now, it is Bredillet's ambition to move beyond this conflict between competing duties; better yet, the "duty vs. outcome" dualism itself. And this is where Aristotelian virtue ethics come in. The coverage of Bredillet presented here focuses on Bredillet (2010; 2014) and Bredillet et al. (2014).

To give a brief backdrop: Aristotle presented his virtues (in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1926) as golden means between two extremes (which are the vices) e.g. Courage between cowardice (the deficiency) and rashness (the excess); Truthfulness between "understatement" and "boastfulness" (note that this is more in line with truthful "being" rather than speech; so something like authenticity). These ethics, according to Aristotle, are ultimately aimed at achieving *Eudaimonia*: the "happy life" or "well-being", both for individuals and society. This definition of *Eudaimonia* will soon be contrasted with the beliefs of the Roman Stoics. The train of thought here is that ethics, for Aristotle, is the "condition for making righteous actions possible" which in turn "enable the development of [the] right habits" which in turn enables "the development of good character" which leads to achieving *Eudaimonia* (Bredillet, 2014, p. 550). It is crucial to note that ethics, according to Aristotle (and as covered by Bredillet) is "practical knowledge rooted on experience" as well as "good action"; and not just theoretical knowledge (ibid). It can of course be helpful and perhaps even admirable to read about these virtues – and your reading may result in, what Bredillet describes as a general understanding to particular occasions. But it is only when you transform them into real "experience" and "good action" that you can be said to have exhibited practical wisdom i.e. *Phronesis*, which is both an "ethical" virtue and an "intellectual" virtue.

Bredillet, by way of Aristotle then, and in line with Stoic thinkers like Marcus Aurelius not to mention the bulk of pragmatist-thought covered in part III stresses that good leaders, above all, demonstrate *Phronesis*

(also see the description of the wise project manager in action by Bolman and Deal, 2013 via Rolfe et al., 2016 in part II). Bredillet further highlights (from Aristotle) that every ethical virtue is a balanced condition to both excess and deficiency (recall from earlier); and that crucially ethical theory does not offer a “decision procedure” since ethics cannot be reduced to a system of rules, and yet some rules remain “uninfringeable”. To say all in a word, “ethical theory” can “illuminate the nature of virtue”; but what a virtuous agent must do in a particular occasion depends entirely on the context and surrounding circumstances in the moment (Bredillet, 2014, p. 552). And in order to fully “acquire” Phronesis (practical wisdom), one must become “both ethically virtuous and practically wise” through the development of proper habits (i.e. embodied ethical virtues). That is a moral agent’s ethical virtue can only be said to be “fully developed” when “integrated with Phronesis.” (ibid covering Aristotle, 1926)

Bredillet expounds much more on the concepts of Praxis, Phronesis and related terminology, but I would like to turn the attention of the reader to the second aspect of ethics that I think is very important: Ethics is politics. That is, the notion that developing these ethical *and* intellectual virtues; or practice *and* theory, is only done by entering the tradition of a community of practitioners (stressed in MacIntyre, 1985).

Bredillet by way of Eikeland (2008) explains that this community shares common goals, ends, will, wish, want, opinion... as well as the means by which it seeks to achieve them. Bredillet in line with Aristotelian thought (the community is “polis”) crucially notes that entering this community does not entail the blind acceptance of standards, conventions and norms. But, at the same time, it is through the acceptance of such historically developed laws and collective dialogues, which naturally emerged out of the community – in relation to the community, that leads to the possibility of changing them (derived by Bredillet by way of Solomon, 1992 and Tsoukas and Cummings, 1997). If you follow this line of argumentation, you may wonder how Bredillet consoles his insistence on being part of the project management practitioner community, with the fact that he wants to re-think the industry-defining standards (as per Kliem’s account). Well, here we must elaborate on what is meant by “standards”. Bredillet makes a clear distinction between what he terms “arbitrary” standards and “non-arbitrary” standards. The “non-arbitrary” standards are defined as “fixed points” or “ideals” for a set of practitioners to aim toward performing a certain kind of activity “competently or, according to certain quality” (according to Eikeland, 2008, p. 26). These ideals are not influenced by any “counter facts”, neither qualitatively nor quantitatively – rather, they arise from the established success of “virtuoso practitioners”. And crucially, they are dynamic, that is, they change when someone finds a better way of doing something. Eikeland describes these standards as having the characteristics of “not everybody should or could realize them equally or fully [due to] their non-arbitrary character, their immanence as patterns to practice, and ‘ways-of-doing-things’”; and their “practical inevitability in human life as either implicit or explicit, vague or more exact standards of measurement, as standards of validity of excellence” (ibid). That is, they express an existential necessity of what it means to be or to do something. Bredillet places the arbitrary kind of standards, which he calls unnecessary and enforced and are implemented from outside forces and accepted through convention, in direct opposition to these necessary, non-arbitrary standards, which arise from within the practice and are constantly changing.

Recall the discussion from earlier on the deontologist and consequentialist classifications by Bredillet, of the PMI and the APM codes of ethics, respectively. It is here that we can introduce Bredillet’s solution, which is to “move beyond” the conflicts between competing duties and duty vs. outcomes by applying the Aristotelian perspective. Bredillet asserts, in line with Harrison (2004), that the PMI and APM codes are focusing on the practitioner’s question “What is my duty?” where the focus is on means and facts. But that Aristotle was not concerned with resolving conflicts between competing duties (such as duty to

society versus duty to client: initially asserted by Harrison, 2004, p. 1). To highlight this point, Bredillet provides examples from these codes. Take this example from the APM code (5.1.3): “...act in the best interests of their employer and clients in all business and professional matters, taking account of the wider public interest concerns and those of any employee or colleague”. And this from the PMI code (2.2.1): “...decisions...actions based on the best interests of society...” vs. 4.3.4: “duty of loyalty to our employer”. Bredillet then makes his argument: that Aristotelian ethics goes beyond the two normative ethics, and that the missing piece is virtue i.e. the “good character” of the project management practitioner herself. And as we have built so far, this good character (ethical virtue) is developed alongside intellectual virtues, and is linked to experience (not short-cuts) and is always done in relation to a community (polis). And so the “good” project manager asks instead “Why should I undertake my duty?” (ends potentially contributing to Eudaimonia) and “How ought I act in this situation?” (“Good action, means, values” that can get me there); not “what is my duty?” (Bredillet, 2014, p. 559). In future sections, we will see how “caring” about one’s work ties into this. Also Ljungblom and Lennerfors (2018) describe (in contrast to the “minimalistic thinker”) to act in a “maximalistically” ethical way: to go above and beyond in the pursuit of the excellent (action; character). And in part III, we will see what pragmatists like Dreyfus and Coeckelbergh have to say on this angle.

In other words, Bredillet is proposing a shift in ethical perspective: from an ethic of “conduct” to an ethic of “character”; and that this can take us beyond the classical dichotomy of “duty” (and competing/conflicting duties) vs. “outcome”. Practical wisdom (Praxis; Phronesis) is the missing link: it makes duty (the means; living with virtue) and the outcomes (the ends; Eudaimonia) inseparable. From Eikeland (2008, p. 59) “we cannot be prudent [(practically wise)] without being good and we cannot be fully good without being prudent, taking the particulars of the situation into account”. Not only that, but we can also bridge the gap between “facts and values” – that is we can transform evaluative judgment into factual statement about what we recognize as a good-competent PM, and what she “does”: She acts in a specific situation, as part of a specific community, aiming toward a specific “end”; and how her action culminates in the ultimate end (for her and for the community), Eudaimonia. This proposed link between the PM’s ethical character with the PM’s perceived competence is superior, in the view of Bredillet et al. (2014), than utilizing any competence attribute-based assessment where a list of features must be met by the PM; or any performance-based assessment where some factual evidence meeting some performance criteria must be presented. So being a competent PM is “not just about having some theoretical knowledge, experience and being able to demonstrate practical skills”; it is more about being able to “articulate in specific project situations and contexts, both theory and practice, ethical and intellectual virtues, through...Phronesis and deliberation and dialogue” (Bredillet, 2014, p. 557). One then must be recognized as a “good” project manager, by peers and broader stakeholders. And this comes about as a result of the above-mentioned way of doing things. So it (becoming a competent project manager) is achieved through the practice itself; the real “experience” gained (never a “short-cut”); and through active participation and engagement with the community of practitioners.

And how does all of this tie into standards? Well, by utilizing Aristotelian ethics, we can achieve Bredillet’s coveted dynamically-arising standards which, as mentioned before, arise with good practices* that are established by virtuoso practitioners as recognized by the community of practitioners; and change dynamically through collective dialogue and deliberation. These coveted standards are the ones which are “observed from within the practice” and are impossible to be observed “just from outside, by perception”. That is, “the observer is the practitioner, the native, dealing with things and theorizing his/her own practice” leading to “no dichotomy between practice and theory” (Bredillet, 2014, p. 557). This leads

Bredillet to call for shorter standards which focus on “values” rather than means, facts, regulations, violations, sanctions or prohibitions; standards that are “inspirational” in nature, and more in line with the ends. He provides the Advertising Federation of Australia Agency Code of Ethics as “an excellent example” of this – asserting that we would not even have to change that much in order for it to be immediately applicable to project management. The first six articles (called “guidelines”) are listed here (Advertising Federation of Australia, 2000):

“THE CODE: WHAT WE BELIEVE

01 Stand up for what you believe is right.

02 Honour all agreements.

03 Don’t break the law. Don’t bend the law.

04 Respect all people.

05 Strive for excellence in everything you do.

06 Give clients your best advice, without fear or favour.”

We can summarize Bredillet’s contribution (as he himself did with Tywoniak and Dwivedula in Bredillet et al., 2014, p. 264) in these two questions:

- Who is the good PM? She is the competent PM; the wise PM: the one who acts rightly or does good action in context. In other words, she does what a good PM is expected to do with regard to purpose she pursues and role she fulfills in this very situation.
- How is this competence assessed? By the community of practitioners who acknowledge that a competent PM behaves according to what a good PM is expected to do with regard to purpose she pursues and role she fulfils in this very situation.

*: “Good” practice [as] performed by “good” practitioners, is developed and supported by ways of knowing...and knowledge forms based on perfecting actualization (*energeia*) as well on practical acquired experience (*empeiría*) and on perception and abstract, distant and external observation (*aísthêsis*). This holistic perspective can be contrasted with the attribute-based approach focusing on the abstract side and the “universal known external to the knower” (i.e. *aísthêsis* and *empeiría* for the techniques), and the performance-based approach emphasizing “the known within the knower” (i.e. *empeiría*). Bredillet et al. (2014, p. 264)

Alternatives to Aristotelian Virtue Ethics

Since we are on the topic of virtue, eudaimonia and virtue ethics, I wanted to provide some alternative coverage to Aristotle's philosophy. The Roman Stoics, represented here mainly by Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* (the 1890 translation by George Long), Seneca's *Letters to Lucilius* (Seneca, 1932) and the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus (Epictetus, 1955) are seen by many as some of the earliest virtue-ethicists around. In fact Sharpe (2013) refers to Stoicism as the definitive ancient virtue ethics – at least in the European domain. They have some similarities with the Aristotelian school:

- They both see virtue as emerging onto a certain community/polis: In the case of the Stoics that community is firstly Rome, but then always onto the human race. In Aurelius' words "But my nature is rational and social; and my city and country, so far as I am Antoninus, is Rome, but so far as I am man, it is the world." (Aurelius, 1890, p. 33). And "...for the advantage of the whole universe, of which thou art a part." (Aurelius, 1890, p. 36)
- They both focus on good action and being practically wise. An example also from the *Meditations* "Every moment think steadily as a Roman and a man to do what thou hast in hand with perfect and simple dignity, and feeling of affection, and freedom, and justice; and to give thyself relief from all other thoughts. And thou wilt give thyself relief, if thou doest every act of thy life as if it were the last..." (Aurelius, 1890, p. 6)

However, there are many differences as well, with the main differences being what is seen as "good" and "bad". And "virtue", to the Stoics, being both the process and the end-goal at the same time; while Aristotle wants us to be virtuous so that we can live a happy life.

The Stoics, much more aligned with Eastern philosophy here (e.g. Taoism), see everything which is "outside your [immediate] control" (as Epictetus, 1955, p. 1 puts it) – everything which happens equally to both good and bad men (as Aurelius puts it) as being neither good nor bad in itself. They (originally Epictetus) refer to these as "externalities". Illness, well-being, being poor or having many riches: these are all examples of things that happen "equally to both good and bad men"; and therefore, while a person may prefer to be healthy and rich, a Stoic person sees them as "preferred indifferences". Epictetus summarizes in the *Enchiridion* (1955, p. 1)

"Some things are in our control and others not. Things in our control are opinion, pursuit, desire, aversion, and, in a word, whatever are our own actions. Things not in our control are body, property, reputation, command, and, in one word, whatever are not our own actions."

And so, the truly virtuous has this attitude to such things (the fifteenth point in the *Enchiridion*):

"Remember that you must behave as at a banquet. Is anything brought round to you? Put out your hand, and take a moderate share. Does it pass you? Do not stop it. Is it not come yet? Do not yearn in desire towards it, but wait till it reaches you. So with regard to children, wife, office, riches; and you will some time or other be worthy to feast with the gods. And if you...are able even to forego them, then you will not only be worthy to feast with the gods, but to rule with them also."

It is also evident here why temperance is seen by the Stoics as one of the core virtues.

These externalities should be seen as part of the eternal background so-to-speak, and should never be desired and one's life must never be dedicated to or consumed by them. If this seems to be a passive philosophy at first glance: recall that Aurelius was named "the Last of the Five Good Emperors" (Crook, 2021) with many construction projects, successful military campaigns against the Germanic tribes (personally led by him) and economic flourishing taking place across the Roman provinces during his 19 year reign. Epictetus was brought to Rome a slave working under an oppressive owner who crippled him by breaking his leg, and then won his freedom in 68 CE and went on to become a successful and respected merchant and philosopher (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2021). Seneca the Younger, one of the most prolific Stoic writers was also one of the wealthiest men of his time, and was the personal assistant to the emperor Nero; until the latter (famously despotic and paranoid) ordered Seneca to commit suicide when he wrongfully suspected him of treason. Seneca seeing death as but "the last change" in a series of endless changes that constitute existence obliged immediately and without protest. (Dudley, 2021)

The Stoics simply want us to play the part chosen for us (by "the gods; fate; Clotho; providence...") to the best of our abilities. To do the best job we can, in the present context, at the things we do have some control over; while completely putting the externalities out of our minds. Living with virtue results, as a natural byproduct, to a state that will be compared to Aristotle's Eudaimonia: they describe it as Ataraxia which loosely translates to tranquility, or absence of disturbance. It can be described as a state of "flow" that accompanies one living "in accordance with nature" while never "carrying things to the sweating point" (in the words of Aurelius, 1890, p. 4) toward one extreme or the other. All while being aware of, and loving toward one's community; and while having a deep understanding of the cooperative and complete nature of the universe. From Aurelius (the first page of Book Two in the Meditations):

"...For we are made for co-operation, like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth. To act against one another then is contrary to nature; and it is acting against one another to be vexed and to turn away."

It is also evident in that quote that the Stoics see what we might refer to as "bad" people as simply being bad due to ignorance. They see both the unwittingly ignorant, and the willfully ignorant as being forms (in varying degrees) of ethical ignorance "All these things happen to them by reason of their ignorance of what is good and evil" (ibid). And so they should be empathized with and educated, rather than despised.

To the Stoics, to say that there is an end state to be pursued is misleading, because they see "virtue" as being both the means by which you live life and also the end unto itself. If you can live with virtue, or in accordance with nature as briefly described above, then you are already there so-to-speak. And so "Eudaimonia" is seen as some kind of false god by the Stoics, who believe it to entail the seeking of externalities. They see the state of being at peace as naturally accompanying living with virtue and as arising out of the shedding of what one does not need, rather than the seeking of what one (falsely) perceives would make one happy. Seneca, in his letters to his friend Lucilius (1932), concisely explains the difference between being at peace (/Ataraxia, which here he calls "Joy") and "pleasure" which is transient and dependent on externalities:

"It is the characteristic of Real Joy that it never ceases, and never changes into its opposite."

"Reflect, therefore, that the effect of wisdom is a Joy that is unbroken and continuous...the wise man is never deprived of Joy. This Joy springs only from the knowledge that you possess the virtues."

“...to take another direction, I call it pleasure. For it is inspired by an opinion concerning a spurious good. It exceeds control and is carried to excess.”

This is why, to the Stoics, it is entirely perceivable to live with virtue; at peace; in accordance with nature while at the same time being unhappy or in pain (as Seneca poetically puts, the wise man is the same whether reclining at the banquet or lying on the torturer’s rack). Happiness and unhappiness are seen as always transient, and as leading to one another. And so unlike Aristotle and other philosophers like Epicurean who want us to lead a virtuous life so that we can be happy, the Stoics see virtue (and the tranquility which naturally accompanies living with it) as the end itself: as It makes one fundamentally unconcerned with externalities, and so unconcerned with pleasure and pain; happiness and unhappiness.

And I would also like to briefly introduce some Taoist coverage here because of a few potential parallels. For one, the Stoic state of flowing in accordance with Nature with the Taoist state of “Wu-wei”. This state is best summarized by British philosopher Alan Watts as follows:

“It does not mean you do not cut wood, but it means that you cut wood along the lines where wood is most easy to cut, and you interact with other people along lines which are the most genial. And this, then, is the great fundamental principle which is called wu-wei: which is not to force anything...So wu-wei is always to act in accordance with the pattern of things as they exist. Do not impose on any situation a kind of interference that is not really in accordance with the situation.” (Watts, 2016 – archived lecture)

In fact “The Tao” Itself, which loosely translates to the Way; the Path... is also seen as both the seminal; the ultimate; the underlying as well as the companion; carrier during daily existence and natural action. But ties at the fundamental level of these schools should be left to philosophers. This was simply meant as a brief introduction into other schools of philosophy which have alternative meanings to “virtue” itself; or the being virtuous or the doing of virtue/what is virtuous. Two last parallels I want to highlight are how Taoists also describe that State as different from a fleeting sense of elation. From the Jane English translation of the Tao Te Ching (Laozi et al., 1972) in verse twenty-nine:

“Sometimes one is up and sometimes down.

Therefore the sage avoids extremes, excesses, and complacency.”

And how being “bad” is ultimately a question of ignorance, to be empathized with and remedied; verse twenty-seven:

“What is a good man?

A teacher of a bad man.

What is a bad man?

A good man's charge.”

Maximalistic vs. minimalistic Virtue Ethics

The best way to end part I of the Theory section would be with coverage of Ljungblom and Lennerfors (2018), because not only do they re-affirm a focus on “virtue ethics” in opposition to deontologist or consequentialist dogma; but they also performed a survey on project management students and practitioners in Sweden in order to discern the viability and propagation of said focus. The main virtue of virtue ethics in the authors’ view is that it is dynamic: a continuous process not asunder from nature, it “takes into account the moral development of the agent, whereas deontology and utilitarianism are silent on the dynamic nature of the moral agent” (Ljungblom and Lennerfors, 2018, p. 6 – as initially propounded by Hursthouse, 1999). Another important focus of the authors is that of “maximalistic” vs. “minimalistic” ethics. Simply explained, to be minimalistically ethical, is to live (or work) in a manner not infringing on some agreed upon or prescribed “baseline” of rules – often dictated by the firm for which you work, or the governing body of your industry. While to live in a maximalistically ethical manner is to strive to go beyond what is required by laws and regulations and in pursuit of excellent or exemplary behavior. In fact, Lennerfors (2013) had previously argued, in line with Philipson (2004), that the “dominant way” in which ethics permeate the modern business entity is, unfortunately, that of the minimalistic thinker: where organization members just want to act in adherence to a code of ethics mainly with the aim of avoiding problems or scandals for the organization. However, the study (Ljungblom and Lennerfors, 2018) shows hope in the form of a rising interest in virtue ethics. They presented 88 project management students and 31 practitioners with 3 ethical dilemmas (which involve themes like bribery, standing up for what you think is right etc.) and asked the respondents what they thought about the actions of the fictitious PM, and how they would have acted had they been in their shoes. Overwhelmingly, the respondents replied in terms of personally-derived stances, rather than a simple “evaluation of outcomes (consequentialism)” or the “nature of the action itself (deontology)” all the while describing what they would do, or what the PMs should have done in terms of “virtues” like “honesty; integrity” and most commonly, “courage”. (Ljungblom and Lennerfors, 2018, pp. 10-11)

Ultimately, the authors wanted to highlight that without being instructed to answer in one way or the other, most PMs and PM students evaluated these scenarios and described their evaluations as stemming from their character and in promotion of virtues and avoidance of vices (like cowardice or greed etc.) And while the relationship between “rules and virtues” might not be clear-cut, this can offer a new perspective on how virtue ethics can be perceived and enacted in the setting of project management.

And most importantly, the authors make the argument that when it comes to corporate ethical training programs, we should use virtue ethics that are practiced in “real situations” as a complement to the understanding of the codes of ethics. The authors summarize “...the processual construction of a virtuous project management cannot be accomplished through a code of conduct” (ibid, p. 15). And that so we are able to support such a process, project managers can occasionally hold meetings which focus on how they are actually practicing ethics and how ethics are perceived in the real world. And virtuous and experienced project managers can be invited to these discussions to provide crucial insights that stem from reality – in order to at least “complement the rule-following, almost legalistic ethics in project management.” (ibid, p. 15)

II-2 Main Theory part II: The limitations of the meta, and why a shift toward lived experience

Existential Disruption

On a wider note, we also sense a tangible hesitance when it comes to applying any philosophical or psychological lense(s) onto the field of project management. In their excellent effort, Rolfe et al. (2016) propound that project management in the mainstream literature is often observed through a strictly “scientific prism” – that we, in other words, became mono-focused on applying a representation of a “scenario designed in terms of...logic and science rather than creating new possibilities” (ibid, p. 48). These possibilities are represented by concepts which the authors introduce with the hope of linking them to the actual nature of project management work: mainly “disruption” or the unforeseeable contingencies of day-to-day practice. And since, the authors crucially argue, the efforts by the mainstream governing bodies (e.g. PMI; IPMA) to standardize and measure every aspect and metric of project management has seemingly failed: in that the rates of successful completion of projects in many industries has been steadily falling, with more and more of the projects even being delivered ending up being so with time or cost overruns, or lacking in specified functionality (covered later on); we should start exploring alternative ways to view the meta. The argument here is that this failure on part of the traditional/conventional view of project management to accurately, or holistically, encapsulate the nature of project management work has led to what the authors term “existential disruptions” where the practitioner’s habits or conventional ways of doing things are threatened – but, good news, it is precisely at this point that concepts from philosophy (e.g. existentialist philosophy by way of Heidegger) can be applied in order to reframe or redescribe our assumptions; work through the space of disruptions; or bring into being the intended results of the project. The authors of this paper, and other key papers like van der Hoorn and Whitty (2015) – in line with our previous coverage of Bredillet and Lennerfors – see the importance in trying to understand the “lived experience” of the project manager, and the unique quality of that lived experience is that it is “unforeseeable”. Arguing that the rigid scientific method by which we define and judge project management is a “mistake” because the ontology of science is, by definition, suited to deal with the objects of experience; but not experience itself. The two papers mentioned here take separate routes but both are valid attempts at reframing the meta. In the case of Rolfe et al. (2016), reference is made to works which attempted to understand this concept of disruption, such as *Disruption: Overturning Conventions and Shaking Up the Marketplace* (1996) in which Dru (the author) propounds on her “dynamic logic of disruption” which oversees “convention”, then “disruption”, which then allows “vision”. The idea is that conventions open and close possibilities to us – as in, they allow us to see the world in a certain way, but not in other ways. Think of the conventions of finance or marketing or law: a finance manager sees the world in a different way than a manager with an engineering background for example. We can link this also to Bolman and Deal (2013) where in their book *Organizational Behavior*, they talk about our “frames” – which open up and close possibilities to us as they exist in the background of our attention. By referring to Heidegger himself, in his magnum opus *Being and Time* (1962), we see that he developed these ideas of “conventions” and “frames” – saying that we as humans are “embedded” in them for seeing things. That we are embedded in habits of practice, and by extension, habits for existence itself. But then, in moments of sudden estrangement or perplexity, we are disrupted from those habits of existence. The authors link this disruption with theirs and continue by saying that Dru averred that it is in those moments of disruption that we can see/become aware of our own conventions and frames (a concept they come to call “defamiliarization”). It is important to note that Dru does not pursue these links to Heidegger in her own work: it is Rolfe et al. (2016) who develop this concept of disruption and make it an “existential” sort of disruption – that is, it is hardly just a cognitive or an intellectual

activity that is disrupted; rather, the experience of disruption is experienced in one's "whole being". The authors give an example from Kierkegaard (1995, p. 11) in saying "One feature peculiar to humans is the ability to detach ourselves from our lives and see ourselves as if we were 'just one of them.' For some of us, the thought of this comes more often and stays longer." So this kind of detachment is not the one that a positivist scientist would "perform" by detaching herself from the subject matter of the research. Rather, it is standing at an emotional distance from oneself to become aware of our own set of conventions, and to see ourselves "just as one of them". The authors expound a lot on the concepts of reflection and "reflection as a form of experience": an existential not a sensory one; as well as Heidegger's "destruction" which comes about after "questioning" which in turn comes about after our initial "detachment", but it is really the link between Heidegger's philosophy and the disruption that arises from the failures of the conventional view of project management that should take center stage here.

The main argument here is that when project management (as a concept) started becoming a "ubiquitous method" of organizing work in the 1950's (Cicmil and Hodgson, 2006a), and techniques such as PERT (program evaluation and review technique) for scheduling and evaluating progress in projects became popular (in spite of their effectiveness being called into question in papers like Koskela and Howell, 2008), that this meta became what is "familiar and conventional". However, with reports and studies like Flyvbjerg (2012), The Standish Group report (from 2009), McKinsey in conjunction with the University of Oxford (covered in Bloch et al., 2012) showing that projects across a wide range of industries have been revealing disturbing results in the form of ever-falling rates of projects being delivered on time, on budget and with the required features, we need to stop and seriously consider how we view project management as a field. That "when there is a clear and expanding distinction between what the practice claims to be able to do and what it actually achieves, then the practice can reasonably be said to be in crisis" as derived from the work of philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre (1985, p. 106). The authors, by way of Koskela and Howell (2008) go so far as to say that the discipline has long been in crisis, and that a paradigm change needs to be realized. On this point, the authors introduce the thoughts of Thomas Kuhn who observed (in his 1996 book) that all paradigms are built upon earlier ones and try to analyze the present-day project management meta through two historicist methods: "presentism" whereby a historian takes the current day model or concept and tries to find that it had a parallel meaning in the past; and "finalism" which analyzes history as a finalized process that necessarily leads from that point to the present. They do this to conclude that all current forms of studying project management practices do so from an ahistorical perspective (as initially propounded by Cicmil and Hodgson, 2006a), which falsely assumes the "universality" of the present practices. The problem with this form of research is that current project management methods become wrongfully perceived as independent of historical forces and therefore immune to the contingencies of the past. The authors delve deep into these issues of historicity and accepting the current meta at face value, but all we need to take away here is that when using a given technique that is "predicated upon a practice's fundamental principles" and it "consistently fails to yield a result the practice predicts", then it must be assumed that the practice is "internally inconsistent" – in a way that cannot be "resolved by the normal techniques of the [very same] practice" because those very techniques rely on "the coherence of the practice for their efficacy". This line of argumentation is applied by Rolfe et al. (2016, p. 53) as derived from Heidegger's *Being and Time* and Kuhn (1996, pp. 73-76).

The authors turn to Heidegger in saying that this may have begun as a failure of the tools and methods of the practice; but the repeated failure of those tools has led to the practice itself being called into question – linking it to Heideggerian philosophy by noting that the practice and the practitioners themselves now face "an instrumental disruption" to their activities. The authors lay aside the notion that the field of

project management can naturally “evolve” in line with its current assumptions, theories and practices, like in the way it is attempting to do so with “rapid, agile, extreme and radical” project management methods. Saying that these “new” methods are still “tightly constrained” and therefore work only under highly specific circumstances e.g. agile specifically dealing with unclear requirements from a client in a software project (Highsmith, 2010). No, they argue, project management in particular is a “situated and contextual activity” that is “deeply imbued with meaning” (Rolfe et al., 2016, p. 54 as initially argued by Fincham, 2002) – and the repeated failure of the tools and methods at hand for the project manager seem to lead to “singular and intense existential disruptions” that cannot be captured or dealt with by existing approaches. To say all in a word, we need to stop viewing the causes of project failure as deviations from good practice, and more as symptoms of internal contradiction within the practice itself.

The Metalanguage vs. the Existential Hermeneutic Practitioner

We do this by performing a thorough “redescription” of the meta. By seeing that the tools and techniques which are founded upon the natural sciences may be useful in setting up or getting funded; but are inadequate measurers and achievers of project success. This clear distinction between “practice” and “science” is very well understood by (experienced) project managers as stated in Morris (2006). This redescription presented by Rolfe et al. (2016) borrows heavily from Rorty’s Contingency, Irony and Solidarity (1989) and is embroiled heavily in language games and ironism (the “ironist” as described by Rorty, 1989 is that for whom anything can be made to look good or bad by being redescribed without the weight of what Rolfe et al. call “the final vocabulary” – think of how chronically optimistic people can always describe the glass as half full). This, as Rolfe et al. suggest, applies to project managers in that they can remove the heavy burden of the final vocabulary (in the form of the project management metanarrative, and its universal, abstracted and contradictory search for knowledge) off their shoulders and instead see their role as negotiating the vast array of narratives which make up the corporate world of which they find themselves part (for the temporary period of time during which the project exists). Each of these narratives is carrying its own justification for “truth” at each moment and the project manager, for brief moments at a time, is redescribing a small part of that world long enough to create some kind of value for the society she serves. The authors make a clear distinction between the “ironist” who is adept at recognizing the “organizational language games” which surrounds her; who sees that her “values, beliefs and ways of doing things are not rooted in nature itself but are conventions shaped by the history of a practice” (Rolfe et al., 2016, p. 56). And the “fundamentalist” who sees that the terms in which their work practices lie are “not a game”: that they “do indeed correspond with something eternal and immutable” making the language of the current practice for these people “the final vocabulary” (ibid). They assert that none of us are full-on ironists or fundamentalists, but that everybody lies on a spectrum: that we all have some terms in our language we are willing to debate and others we are not. But that, crucially, project managers in particular need to be wary that there are a multitude of language games clamoring for dominance within the organization at each point (as mentioned in Bresnen, 2006) – and that negotiating these competing languages is a critical skill for the project manager to have. This is because, as Fincham (2002) noted, the project will become a vehicle for the realization of one or more of these competing organizational narratives. And this ironist attitude can assist in facilitating this skill. Ultimately, Rolfe et al. want to contrast the approach of the “metalanguage” i.e. the one of conventional project management practice, with theirs, which they describe as “the approach of the existential hermeneutic practitioner” (Rolfe et al., 2016, p. 57). The latter exhibits a “reflective” and “non-defensive” attitude and does not marginalize other specialist languages. She exhibits an ironic disposition toward language that allows her to recognize the necessity of having multiple language games, and to ultimately work at the intersections

between them. Linehan and Kavanagh (2006, p. 56) argue that having isolated business units has led to each of them developing their own isomorphic and distinct languages: you have a sales language, a production language, an accounting language etc., but when project management was offered as an integrating mechanism to counter this fragmentation, it ironically became “yet another language into the mix”, with its own vocabulary of bar charts, histograms, work breakdown structure, project life cycle balanced matrix and so on.

To summarize this immense work, we can say that the authors of Rolfe et al. (2016) want to make a distinction between the manager who generally seeks success through the application of the overarching metalanguage of formal project management practice, and the one who manifests an existential hermeneutic approach of ironic redescription. Bolman and Deal (2013, p. 27), borrowing from Heidegger “Managers who master the hammer and expect all problems to behave like nails find life at work confusing and frustrating”. The advanced or the “wise” manager, then, “deliberately reframes complex problems” and “challenges the assumptions in which the problem is based” (ibid). This wise manager wants a diverse collection of high quality tools at her disposal, and knows the difference between having a tool, and knowing when to use it. This wise project manager, which is demonstrably wise in a practical (not just theoretical) sense, knows the difference between what is supposed to work and what just works; and will not, as a simple example, waste her team’s time by having them develop a thorough Gantt chart at the time that the project management handbook would suggest when she knows that it would be more apt to finalize the scope of the project or await crucial material (a theme that will return when discussing the next paper). Rolfe et al. (2016) proffer that the universal project management metalanguage “has its foundation in the rational framework of the natural sciences”, but this scientific language relies for its success on the reduction of all aspects of the environment to “quantifiable, measurable natural objects” (Rolfe et al., p. 59; from the building blocks presented in Chalmers, 1976). But project managers specifically, and typically, face issues of meaning that have “human beings as the external referents rather than inanimate objects” (ibid, p. 59). Therefore, this kind of “disinterested objectivity” has little to no bearing on the issues that project managers regularly face. This leads the authors to conclude that the traditional model is no longer sufficient condition for effective practice and for establishing trust (in the ways of practicing project management, not just in conceptualizing the field of study).

A shift from “being” toward “becoming”

Another manner in which we can reframe the meta is by using Heidegger’s philosophy itself as an alternative lens, which is what van der Hoorn and Whitty (2015) did. They present Heidegger’s magnum opus itself (Being and Time, 1962) as an alternative paradigm for considering the phenomena of projects in an attempt to destroy what they (as Heidegger did) term “the Cartesian paradigm” of traditional project management. We will delve deeper into this destruction of the Cartesian paradigm when discussing the writings of Dreyfus and Coeckelbergh in part III. In their literature review, van der Hoorn and Whitty (2015) note how Bredillet (2010) provided a detailed description of the nine project management schools – covering theoretical, ontological and epistemological considerations. They note that four of these schools are underpinned “solely by positivism”, and the remaining five have positivist components. They make this important note in order to give reason for their paradigm which breaks fully from this positivist perspective, and instead focuses (like the previous and upcoming sections) on the lived experience within project management discourse. This paper in line with papers like the previously discussed Bloch et al. (2012); Cicmil and Hodgson (2006b); and the 2013 KPMG project management survey report reiterates its dissatisfaction with both the modern project management industry and the research that is being done on them. To say all in a word: if projects are not delivering, why is the number of project management

standardized methods/models/tools, as well as certifications and memberships offered by its governing bodies (e.g. PMI) continually on the rise?

In order to make this break, the authors present their paper (in line with thinkers like Cicmil, 2006) as a shift toward “becoming” as opposed to “being”. The ontology of being focuses on objects, things, states in an objectified and discrete manner; while becoming is “dynamic” and is more interested in “activity; process” (defined in Linehan and Kavanagh, 2006 – touched upon in the previous sections). But this paper goes further than ontology by focusing on understanding the lived experience aspect (and encouraging me to pursue a phenomenological approach). The authors do this by exploring key concepts from Heidegger’s Being and Time (such as modes of being; temporality; being-in-the-world...) and use those as a theoretical framework to explore the various aspects of project management – from the viewpoint of the project manager herself. It is important to note that the authors cover almost all concepts from Heidegger’s Being and Time and link them to project management; but for the sake of brevity, I will focus on a few important ones. Starting with Being-in-the-World as it is a cornerstone concept in Being and Time, and starkly highlights the distinction between Heidegger’s ontology and conventional “Cartesian subject-object dualism”. Simply put, the human being (who is the subject of our study – termed “Dasein” in Being and Time) is not separate from her environment; rather she is “infused within” her world. Dasein does not simply project meaning onto objects; rather, it is through her interaction with those objects that meaning, itself, is generated. The argument here is that by dividing project management into separate components (by dividing the people from the artefacts from the processes etc.), we are in fact decreasing our understanding of the project management phenomenon. Instead we need to recognize the “inextricable coupling, and recursive feedback relationship between Dasein and equipment”. It is only by viewing the project manager as being infused within their world that we can “reveal” the phenomena of the project, and what it means to manage it. (van der Hoorn and Whitty, 2015, p. 8)

Heideggerian terminology applied to the project management “world”

Another important concept is “the world(s)” and “the universe”. To explain it in simple terms, Heidegger’s view of the universe is the totality of de-contextualized “stuff”, it is our environment in its most objective/detached manner – think of atoms. It is only when this “stuff” arranges itself in a way that allows it to “manifest” in our world that it becomes ready-at-hand (like atoms being in the shape of a hammer). Being *ready-at-hand* and *manifesting* in our world are always linked to Heidegger’s *in-order-to*’s and *for-the-sake of which*’s. The authors provide an excellent example on the *world-of* the project:

“The *world-of* the project is the project team and the stakeholder’s place of being/acting; not an abstract place onto which thoughts are projected (in some kind of detached manner). The project manager (*Dasein*) draws a Gantt chart *in-order-to* illustrate tasks and events against time, *in-order-to* organise and coordinate labour and resources, *in-order-to* make a prototype product, *for-the-sake-of-which* to earn money to support a family, *for-the-ultimate-for-the-sake-of-which* to be a parent. Or, the project manager draws a Gantt chart *in-order-to* signal project progress to senior management, *in-order-to* manage the expectations of senior management, *in-order-to*... Now, the *being* of the first Gantt chart is different to that of the second. And both can exist in the same *world-of* the project [but the structure of their *equipmental totality*, another Heidegger concept, is different.]” (ibid, p. 11)

Another important concept is *dealing*, which basically entails the “being” of those involved and is crucially embodied in action – rather than cognition. “It is through action (dealing) that meaning is

revealed. Cognitive knowledge distilled as standard sets of definitions, and rules of procedures in a body of knowledge book omits a significant amount of what is required to actually deal (find meaning) with the project phenomena” (ibid, p. 15). Note here that the authors criticize the project management community’s obsession with codifying its practice because a large portion of the interactions by project participants and stakeholders are tacit, contextual and transparent. “The rules emerge dynamically out of the totality of the changing situation. This necessitates that we take a broader perspective to what is the management of projects, and appreciate that the traditional notion of project management is likely failing to capture much of the tacit dealing that project teams and project managers experience” (ibid, p. 12). One more important concept, related to *dealing*, is “DasMan” or “the They”. *They* are the source of norms and behaviors to which *Dasein* conforms. The *they* is the source of the “done thing” or the “right way of doing something” (as defined in Greaves’ Starting with Heidegger, 2010). The authors argue that *they* are a necessary but “constraining” force in project management, in that it restricts innovation and dictates expected behaviors that may not align with what is actually required in the present context (think back to Kliem, 2012 warning that standards could stifle growth; and to Bredillet’s arbitrary standards.)

Now that a few of Heidegger’s key concepts have been presented, I can elaborate on how van der Hoorn and Whitty (2015) want to use them to construct their alternative paradigm. It is the view of the authors that the concept “project” itself only emerges when one or more component(s) of the organization’s *equipment totality* stops doing its job – that is, it ceases to enable the organization to meet its objective. This could either be due to a failure of the equipment or a change in the organization’s priorities, activities or objectives, which renders the present equipment totality unable to deliver a new required activity or objective. The *Dasein* identifies that an element within the *equipment totality* of the organization has become *unready-to-hand*, and a “project” arises from this state of affairs. Therefore projects can be seen as particular “situations” when *Dasein* wants to restore the *ready-to-hand* state, and is unable to “easily restore this situation with their current *dealing* and/or *equipment totality*” (ibid, p. 16). It is critical to note that an organization may choose not to rectify the *unready-to-hand* state altogether (e.g. a business case is performed and the project is deemed unfeasible) in which case the organization accepts a new state of *ready-to-hand*.

Project Management vs. the Managing of Projects: An Industry vs. a Stifled Activity

It is now apt to introduce the crucial distinction the authors make between “project management” (think Rolfe et al.’s conventional metalanguage; “industry”; governing bodies etc.) and the managing of projects. To begin, let us examine a simple example: The demand for a certain organization’s product has outgrown its current supply from its one factory, and a decision-making actor within the firm (our *Dasein*) makes the decision to build a new factory. The original factory was a component of the company’s *equipment totality* and is no longer enough (it is now *unready-to-hand*), and *Dasein* makes the choice to remedy this *unready-to-hand* state (*in-order-to* meet the growing demand). This organization has no experience in construction, and therefore, for it, a “project” has emerged since *dealing* with the situation is beyond the current capability of the organization. However, for the subcontractor who is coming in to lay the bricks, their organizational structure, capabilities, equipment, networks, know-how etc. (their *equipment totality*) allows them to intuitively *deal* with laying the bricks without it being classified as a “project” – that is, it would be operational work – a standard job. If they wish, they may call this standard work for which their organization’s equipment totality has deemed them ready to lay the bricks a project – in which case managing the project of laying the bricks is the job. But it is only really a “project” (as defined in van der Hoorn and Whitty, 2015) when, for example, they have to lay a special fire-proof type of brick with which the organization has little experience, and a specialist needs to be called in – this

would be a “project” for the subcontractor. So by this definition, only when there emerges a situation where *Dasein* is required to *deal* with *unready-to-hand* equipment in their *equipment totality*, and does not have the required capabilities to do so normally, is it a “project.” (ibid, pp. 16-17)

Project management, then, under this Being and Time paradigmatic lens, is a piece of equipment which is consciously selected to *deal* with a situation. Project management is characterized as existing within a “disciplinary matrix” which is “underpinned by Cartesian thinking” and propagated by the “They” (ibid, p. 18), through which an organization is able to *deal* with a situation. And so, ultimately, the authors argue that the PMBOK definition (taken from the Project Management Institute, 2013):

sec. 1.3: “[project management is] the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet the project requirements. Project management is accomplished through the appropriate application and integration of the 47 logically grouped project management processes, which are categorized into five Process Groups.”

...fails to capture the *being* of project management and even the managing of projects in general. Therefore, a capable *Dasein* who is about managing a project with the goal of restoring an *unready-to-hand* situation may use project management i.e. the current disciplinary matrix *in-order-to* restore the situation. But she may also be using other equipment (alternative artefacts and processes). A simple example to illustrate would be the *Dasein* at the factory firm above not finding project management with its Gantt charts and work breakdown structures (as dictated by *the They*) suited to her project. Rather, she finds that for her needs, she should to be on-site motivating the contractor while negotiating a better price with another supplier etc., as opposed to sitting in the office updating the Gantt chart all day (as imposed by e.g. the line organization; or industry-specific standards and protocols etc.) The Gantt chart itself became an *unready-to-hand* piece of *equipment* in her managing of the project toolbox; and her “*anxiety*” (another Heideggerian principle which comes from living *inauthentically* – under the thumb of *the They* as opposed to living *authentically*. Discussed further when covering Dreyfus) increases as she laments how her coworker in production (not a project manager) uses Gantt charts seamlessly and to great effect (i.e. uses “project management” equipment in a non-project capacity) (ibid, p. 19). This is a situation where the authors argue “project management” actually hinders the managing of projects; and why it is crucial that we unshackle both the researcher and the practitioner from the Cartesian dualism, and advance research into the lived experience of projects. They aver that viewing project management through this Heideggerian lens can finally result in the “reconciliation between practitioner experience (phenomena) and research.” (ibid, p. 20)

It is important to note that literature meant with redefining the project management meta, like the ones covered above i.e. papers that make an attempt to shift from positivism to interpretivism; from being to becoming; from a rigid scientific or empirical focus to a philosophical or psychological or phenomenological or existential focus are also in short supply, like the ones meant with applied morality and virtue ethics within project management. Smyth and Morris (2007) confirm that over 66% of sampled literature had a dominant positivist research epistemology. However, van der Hoorn and Whitty (2015) mention that papers with an interpretivist epistemology are currently “on the rise.”

II-3 Main Theory part III: Skillful Coping, Moral Craftsmanship and “Tying it all together”

So far in this paper, we have explored some important concepts, such as:

- Why ethics is important to understand in a context like project management; why project management is in particular need of a rethink when it comes to its current ethical frameworks.
- The normative view of ethics within project management in the form of conflicting; arbitrary; imposed standards that are fixed vs. an alternative framework of conceptualization in the form of dynamic; emergent; natural virtue ethics which arise from within the community of practitioners.
- Doing things exactly by the book in order to just be in compliance; avoid scandals vs. the wise; competent; good project manager who exhibits *phronsis* (practical wisdom) and a virtuous character in particular contexts and within a particular community of practitioners, and is therefore judged as being virtuous–competent by that community.
- The failure of the conventional metalanguage’s reductionist approach to encapsulate the reality of the project management practice and how this failure is emerging as “existential disruptions”. How project management, therefore, is in need of an epistemological re-think. How we can focus on the “becoming; phenomenology; lived experience” from within the project management practitioner’s “world” with the aid of existentialist philosophy in order to come to a more pragmatic; accurate; holistic understanding of the field: both in theory and in practice.

And now, in order to provide an operational and packaged framework in which to operate, I want to introduce the writings of two influential authors: Mark Coeckelbergh (especially Coeckelbergh 2007, 2012, 2013, 2013a, 2018 and his contributions in Cropley et al., 2014); as well as Dreyfus – particularly Dreyfus (1975; 1980; 2002a; 2005) and Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1980a; 1991).

Dreyfusian anti-cognitivism and anti-instruction

If one is to summarize Dreyfus’ immense body of work in one phrase, it would be “skillful coping”. Dreyfus – heavily influenced by Heidegger’s *Being and Time* – started deliberating on what is, and what influences skill development in human beings; and spent his professional life (often time partnering with his brother as in Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1980a) trying to link this skill development concept with the many ways modern humans find themselves interfacing with technology. To present it succinctly, skillful coping is closely tied to the aforementioned Heideggerian principles “ready-to-hand” and “unready-to-hand”. Say you are operating a spreadsheet on your computer: the computer, the tool, is *ready-to-hand* and you do not notice it; it does not manifest itself into your cognitive functions. Now say the computer crashes: it is at this point that it becomes *unready-to-hand* and therefore *present-at-hand*^{**}. Dreyfus’ skillful coping tries to understand human action in line with this framework. For Dreyfus, when we handle things with which we are familiar, or at which we are skilled, we do so in a steady flow of skillful activity. We do not need a mental representation of our goals, rather, we are responding to our “sense of the situation” (Dreyfus, 2002a, p. 378). Dreyfus’ concept is in opposition to representationalism and the Cartesian dualism we touched upon before. He instead argues that the phenomenology of, and knowledge involved in, practical activity and skill acquisition is neither based on “rules” or “mental representations” (neither instruction nor cognitivism); but involves “a coping that, especially when one is an expert, is based on implicit know-how and intuition” (Dreyfus, 2002a, p. 381). In other words, the activity may be

goal-oriented, but we do not “think about the goal” while coping. And crucially, “deliberation only comes when coping is blocked”. (ibid)

Dreyfus elaborates by affirming that when we are “novices” (beginners) at a certain skill or trade or craft etc., we need rules: “rules are for beginners” (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1980a); but as we move up the stages of skill development, we start relying on concrete experience rather than abstract principle. Dreyfus and Dreyfus provide the examples of learning a new language, learning to fly a plane, learning to play chess: “The expert pilot, having finally reached this non-analytical stage of performance, responds intuitively and appropriately to his current situation” (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1980a, p. 12). “Masterful performance” can only take place when the expert, “who no longer needs principles, can cease to pay conscious attention to his performance and can let all the mental energy previously used in monitoring his performance go into producing almost instantaneously the appropriate perspective and its associated action” (ibid, p. 14). Further, as covered by Coeckelbergh, Dreyfus and Dreyfus note that as one becomes expert, their experiences become holistic and integrated; that some kind of unification and integration across material/bodily (including mental) skills starts happening. And this type of experience cannot be reduced to rules or a sequence of movements that can simply be reduced to a recipe or a pamphlet for beginners. So crucially, it makes no sense for Dreyfus (1980, p. 9) that we “attempt to capture a skill by using a representation of the original elements used by beginners, since these elements are not integrated into the final skill.” Coeckelbergh also elaborates on Dreyfus’ anti-cognitivist stance which we touched upon in the previous paragraph: he notes how Dreyfus stands in opposition to McDowell (2007) in arguing that experience is not inherently conceptual and that we must overcome the myth of the mental (Dreyfus, 2005). Instead we need to look toward non-conceptual, embodied, coping. That against, or rather, beyond both representationism (i.e. representing things from a detached theoretical perspective; the Cartesian dualism); and cognitivism, lies the argument “everyday coping does not require our minds to impose meaning onto the world” (Coeckelbergh, 2018, p. 3). Dreyfus wants us to consider the possibility that “embodied beings like us take, as input, energy from the physical universe and process it in such a way as to open them to a world in terms of their needs, interests, and bodily capacities without their minds needing to impose a meaning on a meaningless Given.” (Dreyfus, 2005, p. 49). Instead, Coeckelbergh summarizes, the world is always already meaningful to us during this everyday coping. It is here that a link between Dreyfus and Aristotle’s Nicomachean ethics (covered in part I) can be established. Coeckelbergh vis-à-vis Annas and McPherson (particularly Annas, 2007 and McPherson, 2005) avers that Aristotle’s ideas on virtue, skill, and practical wisdom (Phronesis) – despite focusing on action – are still too “intellectualist” or “theory-oriented” for his taste. He states that Dreyfus’ skillful coping can take us much further toward developing a theory that is “closer to the actual phenomena of skilled coping and their [the embedded experiences’] relation to virtue and good” (Coeckelbergh, 2018). For example, Dreyfus’ notion that it is enough for us to do good – in the sense that we know how to do good “in practice”, in the context that we are in (as touched upon in the previous sections). And (cognitive) reflection (tied with having theoretical knowledge about that “virtuous” practice) can actually get in the way of this “virtue-as-skilled-engagement” or “virtue-as-performance” (ibid).

** : Please note that Dreyfus has a particular reading of Heidegger here. When Heidegger introduces “present-at-hand” (*Vorhandenheit*) he is deriving it from the word “existentia” (existence) – a word that Germans traditionally use alongside *Dasein*. But Heidegger used *Dasein* as a sort of representation of human finitude instead. All you need to know is: when the tool breaks down (becomes *unready to hand*), that breaking down in itself signifies its presence at hand. Dreyfus takes it a step further and says that by breaking down, the tool emerges or comes into view – and calls that “presence-at-hand”, as if the tool’s existence is tied directly with its presence in our mental capacities/cognitive functions.

This somewhat goes against Annas (2007), who by way of Aristotle, argues that virtue is about having a disposition to act for reasons i.e. Eudaimonia – so we are always deliberating on what is virtuous and what is not before or after acting. But Coeckelbergh crucially argues that the Dreyfusian school of thought wants to show us that virtue is not only analogous to skill; but “entirely a matter of skill...understood as embodied coping, and as not needing anything else than know-how: knowing how to do good (in practice)” (Coeckelbergh, 2018 under “Virtue and skill”). Coeckelbergh really likes this train of thought (as we shall see in the coverage of his moral craftsmanship) saying that by defining virtue in terms of skill (incidentally, Dreyfus and Coeckelbergh also define technology in terms of skill), we arrive at a conceptualization of virtue that it is a matter of practical wisdom, which implies a knowing-how and skill. And that “being wise” is tantamount to naturally following “a way” (refer to the Taoist and Stoic coverage in part I). But Coeckelbergh asserts that this conceptualization differs from the Stoics in that there is not first a “logos” which then needs to be applied to the real world; rather, virtue is about having ethical know-how and simply doing it; practicing it. I however disagree with Coeckelbergh’s over-emphasis on the Stoic logos, primarily because in Aurelius’ *Meditations*, we find passages like these: “No longer talk at all about the kind of man that a good man ought to be, but be such” (Aurelius, 1890, p. 61). So while “living in accordance with nature” to the Stoics might initially arise from the seminal logos, most of Aurelius’ practical wisdom and advice to himself and (accidentally) others is discussed in relation to a reservoir of personal experiences (e.g. the many wars he led against the Germanic tribes; the many children he lost etc.) and mentors that he respected and learned from along his journey. In fact he stresses that too much deliberation; excessive reading; sophism; superstition and even the gods themselves be put aside in favor of actually to “do what thou hast in hand with perfect and simple dignity...and give thyself relief from all other thoughts” (ibid, p. 6) in the present context, and to the best of one’s ability. Ultimately, Coeckelbergh and Dreyfus are aiming to show us that “virtue; skill” and even “technology” are all integrated. That there are not two separate sides: “reason and intellect” vs. “embodied coping and material technologies”. Rather, there is only one skillful coping, engagement, and practice; and virtue is all about the quality of that coping, engagement, and practice. (Coeckelbergh, 2018)

To summarize, here is an example provided in Coeckelbergh (2018 under section 5.1). Please note that another version of this example will be provided once we expand on some more concepts:

“Environmental virtue is not something abstract and external (say, a principle) that is imposed on the lifeworld as it were from outside, but rather something that goes on in the lifeworld and that transforms it. It is about how we (skillfully and technologically) relate to our environment. Virtue is then ‘a way of doing’ and a ‘form of life’.”

Coeckelbergh vs. Dreyfus

So far Coeckelbergh and Dreyfus have been in agreement. But Coeckelbergh had quite a few issues with Dreyfus’ body of work, and his “moral craftsmanship” idea can be seen as a continuation of Dreyfus’ “skillful coping” philosophy: where some things were added and others omitted (in Coeckelbergh’s own words “exposed, discussed, and repaired”), and so goes the circle of academia.

To start with, Coeckelbergh did not see eye to eye with Dreyfus when it came to the latter’s conceptualization of technology. As covered earlier, Dreyfus, in line with Heidegger saw technology as a tool. This is Dreyfus’ first way of conceptualizing technology and our interfacing with it (the conventional way). The second way is technology in its contemporary forms (e.g. the internet) – and it is here that technology comes to be seen (by Dreyfus) as a threat to meaning and a threat to skilled

engagement. Coeckelbergh argues that Dreyfus was too much under Heidegger's influence when he made these arguments (Heidegger embraced "craftwork" but argued that modern technology is enframing and constitutes a danger). Coeckelbergh criticizes both definitions, suggesting that Dreyfus look more toward phenomenology for the first one i.e. a thermometer is not so much a tool as a feature of the world we perceive adding that Dreyfus unnecessarily limits his discussion of technology to tools when we can be looking more at the role of skills and embodied coping when it comes to our engagement with such technology. And for the second meaning where modern technology (mostly the internet) is seen by Dreyfus (building on Heidegger) as alienating and meaningless (in opposition to craftwork), Coeckelbergh states that Dreyfus does raise some valid issues concerning "distance, embodiment and meaning". But that rather than taking the nihilistic route, Dreyfus and Heidegger should both look toward their own body of work to find that the world is always already meaningful, and that we always use technology as "embodied beings". To say all in a word, "when we are online, we don't leave our body at home" (Coeckelbergh, 2013a, p. 130). We do not (or rather cannot) exit being-in-the-world and existence, we remain earthly and situated beings, and these new technologies do not lead to a "lack of embodiment", but a different kind of embodiment that leads to its own account of skillful coping.

The second major problem Coeckelbergh sees with Dreyfus' account is the latter's tendency to under-conceptualize "the social". When "moral craftsmanship" is introduced, we will see just how important the social angle is to Coeckelbergh's framework. Coeckelbergh thinks that Dreyfus could have not limited skillful coping to meanings tied to particular skill performance and could have looked more toward meanings tied with relevant practice, and generally the social. From Coeckelbergh "Skillful coping does not happen in a social vacuum, but is always already linked to larger practices and to a wider social background" (Coeckelbergh, 2018 in section 4). Coeckelbergh thinks that Dreyfus limited his phenomenological analysis to individual subjects and their relation to the world, arguing that Ihde (1990) and Verbeek (2005) did the same, and that all of this stems from an "individualistic" reading of Heidegger. "It must be asked if Dreyfus sufficiently conceptualized the social and took it seriously" writes Coeckelbergh, since, to his mind, social studies of science and technology have always emphasized that technology is embedded in a social context and cannot be properly understood without taking into consideration the social dimension. When Dreyfus provides the example of driving a car, his account of skillful coping, argues Coeckelbergh, is "very good in describing the operation of the car in the sense of changing gears, braking, steering – and indeed the coordination of all these operations. When one is an expert driver, the skills involved no longer require instruction or rules; they are embodied and intuitive" (ibid). Then we must consider that driving a car does not occur in a social vacuum, and driving expertise is not only about the operations as such; it also consists of participation in traffic. And since traffic is a social phenomenon then driving must be considered a social practice. This is why, according to Coeckelbergh, we need to look toward a phenomenology which goes beyond how "I" relate to "world" but also includes "others". In other words, we need to find a phenomenological account that is more social and relational. Coeckelbergh notes how Dreyfus repeatedly mentions "the background", which is not a background of shared practices; rather, it is more mysterious than that: it is hidden and holistic and cannot be spelled out. Dreyfus' background (influenced by Heidegger) needs to "withdraw" to do its job. And by withdrawing, it allows other things to emerge (this in fact is how Dreyfus' phenomenology of skillful coping works). The background, to Dreyfus, is already a "seat of meaning" (as described by Andler, 2000). Coeckelbergh likes this idea of the background as a seat of meaning, but believes that Dreyfus missed a great opportunity here: In his opinion, Dreyfus (also Heidegger) did not need to insist that the background cannot be made explicit. Rather Dreyfus' background could have been made at least partially explicit particularly in terms of social rules or norms (as social scientists do). From

Coeckelbergh: “the social and cultural can be connected to Dreyfus’s thinking about background, but this connection is not further theorized or developed” (Coeckelbergh, 2018 in section 4.1). Coeckelbergh adds that Dreyfus showed some promise to cover the social when he stated “The everyday world is already public; there are already goals and equipment available in society, there are already ‘roles’” (Dreyfus, 1975, pp. 121-122). But then, unfortunately, he restricted the social to Heidegger’s “DasMan” – which has a negative connotation i.e. threatens authenticity (as mentioned earlier). Dreyfus does show a somewhat more positive outlook than Heidegger himself though by stating that we can still afford “individual style” to the modes provided by DasMan, but nevertheless we are still “constituted by ‘DasMan’”. From Dreyfus (1975, p. 129):

“Dasein, which as Being-in-the-world is always a way of acting, can and must give its individual style to the modes of behavior provided by the Anyone [DasMan]. Thus Dasein is both constituted by the Anyone in that all significance is a social achievement, and yet self-constituting by taking over significances from the Anyone to define itself or give itself meaning. With this analysis of the parasitical relation of the individual to the social world, Heidegger gives an account of the relation of the personal to the public which (dis)solves the Husserlian problems arising from the priority of my world to the world.”

Coeckelbergh calls this exercise in thought by Dreyfus a kind of “Heideggerian social philosophy”. However, he still maintains that Dreyfus became mono-focused on DasMan and neglected “Mitsein” (which DasMan is a deformation of) – a criticism initially propounded by Olafson (2008). Carman (2008) responded by saying that Olafson provides an over-individuated notion of Dasein. Be that as it may, this short account of these interpretations of Heidegger is to arrive at this point: Coeckelbergh feels that Dreyfus, like Heidegger, has said too little about the social, and has left too much room for interpretation. That Dreyfus’ suggestion that human beings depend on the social world is important but underdeveloped. Furthermore, to Dreyfus, the social is always seen “as a given, and as one monolithic kind of thing...DasMan remains one undifferentiated ‘block’ or ‘box’” (Coeckelbergh, 2018 under 4.2). To remedy this (neglect of the social), Coeckelbergh suggests turning toward thinkers like Marx and Hegel or contemporary social science (which has more to say on style and the social). It will become evident that Coeckelbergh found what he was looking for in the writings of thinkers like Dewey and Borgmann.

Craftsmanship: Unique yet Social

Before covering Coeckelbergh’s framework of moral craftsmanship, we should start by expounding on what he means by “craftsmanship”: in *The Ethics of Creativity* (2014), Coeckelbergh elucidates that this craftsmanship involves “the development of know-how and skills” that is coupled with “openness to and engagement with the world and with others” (Cropley et al., 2014, p. 46). Right out of the gate, we see that Coeckelbergh starts with “the other” in mind. In fact Coeckelbergh throughout his work wants to instill in the reader that his view of moral change emphasizes personal and societal growth. In fact moral growth is at the heart of Coeckelbergh’s theory and is placed in opposition to moral “design”. Also, in his definition of craftsmanship, Coeckelbergh repeatedly mentions “real world” problems: so this know-how; creativity; imagination; learning... he is aiming toward aspires to be “social” as well as “pragmatic”. But before he/she can reach such heights, our moral craftsman must not only do a job, but also do it with great skill that he/she has attained through training. Coeckelbergh here introduces the important concept of “tacit knowledge”, as defined by Sennett (2008, p. 50): where tactile experience, which involves a highly personalized relational understanding is key. This moral craftsman then, “knows how”, not just “knows that” (as initially defined by Dewey, 1922). Furthermore, our moral craftsman is not simply content with

doing excellent work; rather, he/she is committed and motivated to the creation of the excellent: achieving excellence is, itself, the goal (recall ties with Ljungblom and Lennerfors, 2018 maximalistically ethical employee, and to Bredillet's good; wise; competent; virtuous project manager).

Delving a bit deeper, we should explain how this kind of excellence or virtue comes about. In Coeckelbergh's view, the kind of creativity; imagination; learning... he is describing has little to do with conscious conceptualization; and more to do (and this is derived from Dreyfus, and Aristotle) with creating by handling; improvising; learning while doing... – Phronesis. Another similarity with Dreyfus is that while the apprentice moralist requires "explicit instruction" (e.g. how a beginner cook needs recipes and instructions; how a beginner medical surgeon needs theoretical knowledge of the human body...), becoming an expert moral craftsman is more a process of "emerging" that happens during "the process of [actual] handling" (Cropley et al., 2014, p. 48). This actual handling results in a reservoir of "tacit knowledge" which simply cannot be turned into a recipe. In other words, Usain Bolt could talk for months on end on effective running methods (knowing that); but only he Knows (capital K; or knows how) all the internal intricacies; tactile experience; involvement of his legendary pace. Coeckelbergh, again in line with Dreyfus, and Bredillet, negates the notion that we do away entirely with explicit instruction or standards. We always have beginners entering every field (including project management), and they need explicit instruction and some theory; but, in order to become (moral) experts, it is "tacit knowledge; know-how; knowledge-in-practice" that we are after (ibid, p. 47). More importantly, the neophyte moral craftsman according to Coeckelbergh's framework must exhibit some specific tendencies and characteristics – if he/she wishes to become "expert":

- He/She must not take a detached attitude; rather, he/she must immerse herself; handle the material; take up the tools... (Stop looking at the bike and get on it, in a manner of speaking).
- He/she must have constant resolve/commitment to get better –
- But he/she is not only "competent" as such, but crucially also "creative": and so the way in which he/she performs her craft is specific/unique to her (it is linked to his or her particular way of engaging with things and people). This is because her know-how is "partly shared" and "partly unique"; and the reason he/she is so imaginative/creative is not because he/she has some secret recipe, it is because he/she has acquired a particular kind of know-how through her specific journey.
- This know-how can only be transmitted through intimate personal learning relations, e.g. apprenticeships. But the apprentice cannot simply copy the master. For the apprentice, "imitation is [only] part of the learning" and only "in the beginning" – after which he/she should achieve her own personal craftsmanship (that grows in accordance with a highly unique personal trajectory that emerges within the learning relationship with the master.) (ibid, p. 48)

So craftsmanship, for Coeckelbergh, is a deeply social activity. The collaborations that take place within a workspace are social. The learning that takes place is social learning. All of which result in a highly unique kind of knowledge within each individual working in that workspace; but that could have only developed while working with these people and learning from these specific people, and interfacing with the tools that are present in this specific community/workspace. In other words, they "develop an [individual] creativity [that is still] unique to the place and the team in which they work" (ibid). Recall during our coverage of Bredillet (and Aristotle) how he also describes the practically wise leader/manager

as one who is actively part of a particular community (the project management practitioner community), or polis.

So a craftsman's creative work is judged as "excellent" on two fronts (ibid, p. 49):

- Her work output is excellent: a result of long training in particular social and physical settings with particular people and tools.
- Her work output is excellent on a personal and unique level: that is, he/she herself has become a good craftsman.

Coeckelbergh verbalizes the two splits

The coverage thus far has focused on the "craftsmanship" side of things on a general level; but where does the "moral" aspect come in? In other words, what is moral know-how? How do the skills, personal learning, social learning... that we discussed in the previous section apply to the moral domain? And what kind of excellence are we looking for to that end?

The discussion on moral creativity (as described in Cropley et al., 2014) for Coeckelbergh is split down the middle: on the one hand, you have what he terms the "Platonic and modern" school of thought; and on the other, you have one that is more interested in, and influenced by "pragmatism; phenomenology and lived experience" and not least Aristotelian thinking (ibid, pp. 50-55). I therefore feel comfortable summarizing all my theoretical coverage thus far in the below table in accordance with this Coeckelberghian framework, and then elaborating on split I vs. split II, under what Coeckelbergh himself presents as [moral creativity under the thumb of conceptual design] vs. [moral creativity as moral craftsmanship].

Table I: *Breakdown of the two Splits*

	<i>Split I</i>	<i>Split II</i>
	Kliem as he describes PM codes of ethics as defining/keeping the profession alive...	Kliem when he talks "downsides" of adhering to a code: fostering rigidity of thought; stifling propagation of new knowledge...
	Bredillet's description of "arbitrary; imposed" standards which are "fixed"	Bredillet's "non-arbitrary" and "dynamic" standards which emerge from within the community
<i>part I</i>	Bredillet's classification of the PMI; APM standards as Deontologist; Consequentialist (rationalist; imposed) propagating "the dualism"	Bredillet using Aristotelian virtue ethics to go beyond the "dualism". The Advertising Federation of Australia Code as fostering "ends"
	Performance-based; Metric-based... evaluations determine PM competence	Competence is virtue itself. The PM's virtue/competence is practiced within the context of the practitioner community, and judged as such by this like-minded community

		Aristotle/Bredillet's practically wise project manager who practices "Phronesis; Praxis" within the project management practitioner community Aurelian focus on virtuous action within a community (Rome; the world); Taoist Wu-wei
	Ljungblom and Lennerfors' "minimalistic" ethics; Training programs which focus on codes	Ljungblom and Lennerfors' "Maximalistic ethics"; Training programs that focus on virtue ethics (due to being a natural way to perceive ethics problem-solving) and real-life experiences
<i>part II</i>	"Natural sciences" view of project management; PERT; Set standards and procedure... "The final language" view The conventional, meta-language view "The Cartesian Paradigm" "Positivism" "Being" Living under the thumb of DasMan – "inauthentically" causing "anxiety" by using the tools as prescribed by fixed protocol	The existential disruptions which result from that focus should lead us to look more into the "lived experience" aspect of project management The "ironist's" view The "existential hermeneutic" view Destroying the Cartesian paradigm by applying a Heideggerian existentialist lens "Interpretivism" "Becoming" Dasein utilizes project management tools in the managing of projects at his/her own discretion – according to his/her experiences in a particular context (Demonstrates "practical wisdom": knowing "when to use the hammer" etc.)
<i>part III</i>	"Representationalism"; "Cognitivism"; "Instruction" ... Coeckelbergh's moral creativity under the thumb of conceptual design The "Platonic; modern" school Top-down; Cartesian; Detached subject; Design/Production/Implementation... mentality Lee Vincent's "U-rules"	Dreyfus' "skillful (embodied) coping"; "integrated experience"; "tacit knowledge"; "engagement with the material; handling"; "practice as virtue; virtue as skilled engagement" ... Coeckelbergh's holistic moral creativity as moral craftsmanship MacIntyre and Lee Vincent's Aristotelian Discernment and Deliberation; V-rules and how they can interplay with U-rules "Pragmatism" "Heideggerian phenomenology" Moral improvement is collaborative; Moral change is viewed in terms of Growth...

As you will find as this section unfolds, these two splits are clearly delineated in Coeckelbergh's work and thoroughly elaborated upon. Coeckelbergh, when building his framework for moral creativity, mentions, refers to, and contrasts many of the earlier concepts and works we have already covered in

previous sections. All of this leads me to believe that the two streams, for my intents and purposes, do indeed find their respective resting places in Coeckelbergh's holistic theory of moral creativity.

Moral Creativity under the thumb of conceptual design

And so the first split, presented in Coeckelbergh's theory as moral creativity as (or, more accurately, under the thumb of) "conceptual design", describes a state of affairs that is not too far from what is happening in the project management community today (feel free to re-read parts I and part II). It is when we have ethical or moral problems now, or expect such problems in the future, and in order to solve or prevent them we resort to the "typical response": which is to call for rules; principles that regulate ethical conduct. According to Coeckelbergh, this is the way of the "moral philosophers" who like to both theorize and decree rules for themselves and for others. But also, it is the way that modern society responds to any problem: Many ethical violations within global finance? Let us add yet more ethical codes and regulations. The main problem here according to Coeckelbergh is that this approach to morality reduces the decision-making agent i.e. a human facing an ethical dilemma, to "moral machines" whose "moral subjectivity, if they have any at all, is limited to making or following laws" (ibid, pp. 50-51). What is described here fits an epistemology of theoretical science where there exists a moral "super-agent" who is perfectly rational and who knows what is reasonable at all times. And by following this super-agent's rules, we can all become such a perfectly rational agent. This is the kind of model that philosopher Alan Watts might describe as "the tail wags the dog" ethics – that is, we start off from a prescribed end-point e.g. one might say "I am a utilitarian/Christian..." and so "what would a utilitarian do in this situation?" Another important parallel we can draw here is to Lee Vincent's 2016 paper in which he describes "Universalizable rules" or "U-rules" as he contrasts them with "V-rules" (Aristotelian "Virtue rules" which emerge out of the actor in a specific situation, context etc. not unlike Dreyfus' anti-cognitivist coping). Coeckelbergh calls the former a "top down" approach toward changing society; not so far from Plato (hence why he calls this the Platonic school of thought). And just like with Plato, it is based in "theoria" (which can be translated as "vision") aiming to "design a blueprint" of the perfectly rational moral human or society. But Coeckelbergh wants us to see this is a detached mode of knowing: knowing that "goes on in my head"; knowing of a "philosopher contemplating" (what Nagel, 1986 calls "a view from nowhere"). Not to mention that this view presupposes a "fixed good" that can be applied or reached; and upon reaching it, we would have fixed this "messy, practical world" once and for all. (Cropley et al., 2014, p. 50)

First Steps: Integrating imagination; emotions; intuition

And so it is Coeckelbergh's position that adhering to a fixed moral code of sorts does not equal "morality". That in order to creatively cope with complex things like modern technology risks, environmental degradation, financial crises... we need to include the unspoken element of the very human "emotions", "intuition" or "wisdom". That Plato's "wise men are too occupied with the problems of the superior world; they hold fast to 'the ordered and the measured' and have no time to 'look down at the affairs of men'" (initially presented in Popper, 2013, p. 138 – argued by Coeckelbergh in Cropley et al., 2014, p. 51). Coeckelbergh provides the Humean "pragmatist" approach as an answer to Kantian pure utilitarianism as a good example of this inclusion of imagination and emotion and how they interplay with moral reasoning: an example of leaving the proverbial ivory tower and actually engaging with practical problems. But even this inclusion, for Coeckelbergh, is presented as a start and not yet the destination. He presents papers like Johnson (1993) and even his own essay Coeckelbergh (2007) as examples of works that still present morality as "moral reasoning" i.e. in terms of dry "principles", while at the same time

conceding that things like imagination; emotions; intuition... do play a role *within* that reasoning. But in *Ethics of Creativity* (2014), Coeckelbergh wants to take us all the way to the destination: by taking a drastic second look at morality and seeing it as not really a function of reasoning at all (recall the anti-cognitivist approach of Dreyfus), and not even “imagination” (which is just “one more mental operation” that simply acts as a kind of “tool or plug-in for reasoning”, Cropley et al., 2014, p. 52) – but to look at morality from a more “practical” and “social” lens.

To summarize the above part, Coeckelbergh argues that even by using our imagination when deliberating on ethical dilemmas, or by utilizing emotions and empathy when engaging in moral reasoning: we are still deliberating *within* reasoning. That is, it is still a kind of imagination that “goes on in my head”; the Cartesian subject (me – the deliberator) is still disconnected from “the world”. To say all in a word, despite the Humean approach being a welcome response to the purely rationalistic tendencies in modern ethical frameworks, this response (and others like it) remains a modern response in that it still presupposes a non-relational moral subject: one who is not engaged with the world; one who is contemplating morality (from the top down). Coeckelbergh’s final stance then – in his own words – is of a more “practical kind”: one where we do not have the luxury of starting from a blank slate when dealing with current crises in our very real present context,

“We are already in trouble, and we need to find creative solutions that start from the messy world in which we find ourselves and from the concrete problems we face – as individuals, but also as societies and as people who are called on to respond to others.” (Cropley et al., 2014, p. 52)

Moral Creativity as Moral Craftsmanship

By his own account, this concept (dubbed moral creativity as moral craftsmanship) is heavily embroiled in, or connected with Dewey’s “pragmatism” as well as Heideggerian phenomenology (as covered by thinkers like Dreyfus and Borgmann); not to mention Aristotelian thought (as presented by philosophers like MacIntyre). This whole concept of craftsmanship of which I provided a summarized account (and which was derived from thinkers like Sennett and Crawford) is to do with actually living virtue, competence, morality... And Coeckelbergh’s moral creativity as craftsmanship is a conception of morality that is akin to “moral improvisation; moral engineering; moral tinkering; moral dancing...” in a very “practical and social” sense (Cropley et al., 2014, p. 53). It aims to replace the detached rational moral subject, “ivory tower moral science” and even Cartesian-style empathy with something akin to the development and use of “moral skill” that allows one to cope with on-the-ground moral problems which one and others are involved in within their present context.

Let us start then, just as Coeckelbergh himself does when expounding on this concept, with the writings of John Dewey (with particular focus on Dewey, 1922, and what is termed Dewey’s emphasis: which is a practical emphasis on action and application; described in the mainstream as falling under categories like pragmatism or instrumentalism). Dewey was one of the prime originators (in his book, *Human Nature and Conduct*, 1922) of ideas like know-how (in the vein of integrated tacit knowledge) as opposed to knowing that, which is more theoretical in nature. As such, he can provide a moral epistemology that can afford us some distance from the modern; Platonic approach. Coeckelbergh wants to establish this link by saying that the knowledge we need for ethics is more along the lines of knowing how than knowing that: it is about knowing how to live a good life through the development of practical skill and good habits.

“Habits” is a key theme here as Coeckelbergh posits that they rely on, or involve skill; and skill is always embodied, physical and material. From Dewey (1922, p. 15):

“We should laugh at any one who said that he was master of stone working, but that the art was cooped up within himself and in no wise dependent upon support from objects and assistance from tools”

And so the argument goes that, by extension, “we should laugh at anyone who suggests that acquiring moral mastery is in no way bodily or material” (Cropley et al., 2014, p. 53). This is because we are highly contextual and relational beings, and when we conceptualize ourselves as moral subjects we cannot do so without saying that we are embodied moral subjects: we are always acting in relation to things and others. And so morality can never be merely conceptual, but as Coeckelbergh by way of Dewey (1922, p. 225) asserts, it “arises out of active connections of human beings with one another”. Coeckelbergh adds that this connection should naturally be extended to our own bodies and to matter. And to further unpack, we can retrace our steps back to Heidegger. Coeckelbergh, in line with van der Hoorn and Whitty (2015), notes that Heidegger staunchly opposed the modern Cartesian dualism; the notion that we can achieve complete, sufficient moral knowledge as detached reasoners or detached feelers – as the utilitarians, deontologists or any rationalist thinkers believe. Coeckelbergh, by way of Heidegger, rejects this notion that we are first detached Cartesian moral subjects who then go on to reason about moral problems in an attempt to bridge the distance between ourselves and the world. As we had previously covered, Heidegger used the term *being-in-the-world* to negate the notion that we are separate egos; rather Coeckelbergh continues, we are always already engaged in the world – involved in the world as it emerges. More importantly, recall the discussion we had in part II on existential disruptions: Coeckelbergh critically notes (as derived from Dewey, 1922) that when we do in fact consciously deliberate on some ethical dilemma or moral issue, we do so in moments of reflection that are outside our everyday flow so-to-speak. “The need for moral reflection only arises in terms of crisis, when habits no longer work” (also reasoned in Pappas, 2008, p. 122), and so “morality” as such is very rarely a matter of detached reasoning but more like a “moral development-in-action” – it is a skill–virtue that is dynamically being developed. (Cropley et al., 2014, p. 54)

Coeckelbergh utilizes Dreyfus’ work (especially his phenomenology-focused paper with his brother, Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1991) to drive home this concept of “morality as skill”:

“We are always already embodied and engaged in practices when we encounter a moral problem. Acquiring moral knowledge is a matter of building practical know-how. If we want to become morally mature, we need to learn from experience and use that know-how ‘so as to respond more appropriately to the demands of others in concrete situation.’” (Cropley et al., 2014, p. 54)

And so moral knowledge should always be conceptualized in terms of skill; even if it requires things like intuition, it is intuition that is “cured by experience”. This process is not a “mental, theoretical” exercise but a “worldly, practical exercise”. And so it follows that ethical dilemmas cannot be solved once and for all with the use of decreed moral principles; rather we “have to learn moral creativity” and “grow in its use” (ibid, p. 55 building on Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 1980). This means that if we discern a solution to an ethical problem at one point in time and within a specific context, there is no guarantee that next time we can use the same solution. Recall back to our discussions on instruction and cognitivism vs. embodied/skillful coping from papers like Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1980a): recall how Coeckelbergh and

Dreyfus argue that there are different stages of moral knowledge, and that while the novice might need formalization and propositional knowledge; the expert exhibits “moral maturity” which basically means that one has acquired an expertise that has grown in practice. These “moral experts” according to Coeckelbergh are a lot more creative and imaginative and no longer need rules or other explicit instruction – through their long(er) experience; through embodied “trial and error”; through the “tacit knowledge” they have accrued through embodied experiences and training: they “no longer need the rules” and can therefore improvise; be creative. (Cropley et al., 2014, p. 55)

Also recall to the concepts “handling” and “care” from Heidegger. Coeckelbergh (by way of Crawford, 2009) makes the argument that those who exhibit this moral creativity – those who handle; use; take care of things, not only contribute to good for others, but also to their own “virtue”. For example, diligent work cultivates the virtue of attentiveness. In our professional environment, we are involved in a personal way: “we care”. Our virtue – applied, contributes to our virtue. (Coverage of Crawford, 2009 by Coeckelbergh in Cropley et al., 2014 building on concepts from Heidegger, 1962)

Deliberation not required

We can summarize Coeckelbergh’s posit here as such: moral creativity is presented as a form of craftsmanship. It involves the physical, bodily engagement with things, tools, people; and these engagements provide us with tactile experience and relational understanding. A tacit knowledge of morality so-to-speak: Coeckelbergh likens the moral craftsman as being creative in the ways that a cook is creative: as in the cook has knowledge of cooking that is tacit and gained through the ever-growing tactile experiences she has had through the actual handling of; dealing with; coping with... food and people. And so this moral chef does not exhibit the wisdom of Plato’s statesman; but a more practical kind of wisdom – Phronesis, and exercises practical creativity and practical imagination which enables her to respond adequately to the situation, the people, and the problem at hand. Recall the discussion on Aristotle and Aurelius in part I, and how, as Coeckelbergh here summarizes “[Phronesis] is about perceiving what is good in concrete situations” – “in and through praxis itself” (as Carr, 2006, p. 426 puts it). And how Aristotle maintained that moral excellence comes about as a result of habit. Here we can turn back our attention to Vincent (2006), now to cover the V-rules, which are presented as a perfect template of Aristotelian thought in practice: as in, they emerge out of the wise man through “discernment” and “deliberation”. Discerning that a moral dilemma is a moral dilemma (that requires a solution); and subsequently deliberating on a solution for it in that particular and concrete situation, the context in which this wise man finds himself. Coeckelbergh presents a similar idea by averring that moral creativity can also be looked at in terms of virtue: as it is “the fruit of the development of moral skill”; it requires “imagination”, but not that of the detached Cartesian genius but “imagination-at-work” (Cropley et al., 2014, p. 56). During this imagination-at-work, actual deliberation may not be required at all. Coeckelbergh uses Fesmire to drive home this point (from Fesmire, 2003, p. 28):

“It is not disembodied cerebration deciding which action is derivable from ultimate principles, but is a form of engaged inquiry touched off by an uncertain situation”

Though Coeckelbergh objects to an extent to the use of “inquiry” as it still implies too much of a mental kind of imagination that is unconnected to the social and material (the context; people; tools... at hand). And our coverage of Aristotle can also be wrapped up here by mentioning how his ideas on practical wisdom have inspired the contemporary thinkers we know today as “virtue ethicists”. MacIntyre, in the latest edition of *After Virtue* (2007, p. 150), explains that Phronesis is meant with “the capacity to judge

and to do the right thing in the right place at the right time in the right way”. And so Coeckelbergh continues by saying that therefore, good is never a pre-given; rather, it is always emerging, always being developed with practice. And that “good craftsmanship seems to be good practice, with practice involving internal goods, goods internal to the practice” (Cropley et al., 2014, p. 56) (recall Bredillet’s project management practitioner community, as the polis, deciding that virtue is competence). And in the same vein, to wrap up the discussion on instruction vs. embodied coping: Coeckelbergh asserts that the Phronesis exhibited by the morally creative person in her journey to be an excellent person can hardly be judged by “external standards – ethical rules, laws, principles”; rather, it is part of moral expertise and moral craftsmanship, which no longer needs rules and explicit instruction as it is the result of a long process of moral development through engagement with people and things. Coeckelbergh here borrows some artistic imagery from Dewey and Fesmire in order to drive home this point:

“A jazz musician...takes up the attitude of others by catching a cadence from the group’s signals while anticipating the group’s response to her own signals. Drawing on the resources of tradition, memory, and long exercise, she plays into the past tone to discover the possibilities for future tones.”

(Text from Fesmire, 2003, p. 94 that strengthens Dewey’s metaphor of moral deliberation as dramatic rehearsal – presented by Coeckelbergh in Cropley et al., 2014, p. 57)

Social Engagement and Moral Growth

As we recall from part I, Aristotle’s virtuous person can only be developed within a community. And from a previous paragraph in part III, the “workshop of the craftsman” is always a social place. And so here Coeckelbergh emphasizes that the “moral worker” always works with others; and “moral improvement” is a collaborative project; and the “moral imagination” being exhibited by the moral worker within the collaborative project must always be thought of as also being a social imagination. Coeckelbergh here, through Borgmann (1984), wants to also establish a clear link that we have seen hints of before: that is the link between morality, competence and “social engagement”. I can summarize this by saying that “moral imagination”, “skilled work” and “social engagement” can all arise together: through belonging to a strong work community, through applying collective moral imagination where moral problems arise and demand a collaborative response in relation to the “living society” of which we are a part, with its own particular ongoing “social and moral experiments”. And also through what Borgmann terms “focal practices” i.e. gathering around a common area; drinking together etc. (Cropley et al., 2014, p. 58)

And so Coeckelbergh continues by arguing that if society and morality are always moving, then we can no longer rely on fixed principles – that these principles can be seen as part of our toolkit, but not more than that i.e. they are not part of a “transcendent collection of external truths” that have nothing to do with our social practices. Rather, in agreement with Bredillet (Aristotle), Heidegger and Rolfe et al.’s “ironist”, good is internal to our practices: it emerges out of it. Principles then, according to this Dewey-derived pragmatist view (and recall how Bredillet wants to design the project management codes of ethics in this vein), should be “crystallized forms of moral experience”; not the other way around as the Platonic view sees it (Cropley et al., 2014, pp. 58-59). On a societal-level then, Coeckelbergh (mainly Coeckelbergh, 2012 here) wants us to see that moral change is dependent on the cultural horizon that is already there and on the moral language and the material-technological structures and moral geographies that are already in place (we do not start from a blank slate). And therefore moral change is a slow, incremental process that

cannot be completely controlled. But Coeckelbergh much prefers this metaphor of “growth” than that of “design” or “production” or “implementation” i.e. some Platonic genius decreeing the rules to create a perfect society from the top-down. (Cropley et al., 2014, p. 59)

Recall the example of environmental virtue from earlier, and realize now that when we start deliberating on how to combat climate change, we cannot start off from a blank planet: this planet in this specific situation with these specific creatures that have these specific governance structures etc. are what we have at hand – and so we apply Phronesis and grow or cultivate creative solutions in a practical and social sense. The imagination we need is not imagining an ideal moral world with its perfect principles and rules; nor is it imagining within the limits of “moral reasoning”. Rather, it is a very “practical, social” and “fluid” kind of imagination, a creativity that is entangled with our experiences and our practices.

Virtue-rules vs. Universalizable-rules and a potential marriage

To end, I want to link this “moral dance” that Coeckelbergh wants us to envision between contemporary, past and future to create new moral possibilities, with Lee Vincent’s proposed solution to the Universalizable-rules vs. Virtue-rules dilemma (This is listed as potential solution no. 4 in the paper Vincent, 2016, p. 49): Virtue-rules cannot be reduced to Universalizable-rules; but Universalizable-rules can be reduced to Virtue-rules. You can, as an expert, exhibit moral creativity; Phronesis emerging out of your unique reservoir of tacit knowledge (shaped by your very personal experience and training) when coping; dealing with a specific moral dilemma arising within a specific context within a specific community at a specific time..., while still being in observance of the U-rules that govern your society or workplace at that time. And I add, that within this embodied coping (recall Dreyfus), we slowly cultivate our U-rules in different directions, as our V-rule compass dynamically guides us through time.

III. Secondary Theory

III-1 Truth and Deception

During the interviews, many of the respondents described ethics in line with concepts like “honesty; trustworthiness; integrity”. As an example, RespF talks extensively about the necessity of being honest and open with the client especially during the “pricing” stage in the project lifecycle. By building “cordial” relations with his clients that are built on honesty and transparency, RespF’s firm gains a “good reputation” in the market which leads to long-term, relationship-based and repeat business. In this section, I provide important definitions and concepts related to truth and deception, and introduce previous literature that specifically focuses on lying within project management.

Sissela Bok’s two major books, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life* (1999), and *Secrets: On the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation* (1989) are two seminal works in which Bok provides some of the most important definitions on the topic. Bok avers that there are two axes on which truth lies: an ethical axis and an epistemological axis. These axes are basically tied with intent. Simply put, if a person states a falsehood, while genuinely believing it to be true (e.g. due to being misinformed), they would “epistemologically” be lying; but ethically telling the truth. This means that in Bok’s view, which is in accordance with the traditional view on lying, clear-cut lying occurs only when it is tied to an implicit intention (on part of the deceiver) to mislead the deceived. Many radical skeptics aver that the epistemological aspect, that is the “objective” truth of the matter, should take precedent over the ethical aspect – meaning that due to mankind’s inability to perceive, know or convey objective truths, this “obsession” with truth-telling and lie-avoiding should be done away with since it is pointless to begin with. However, Bok (and to the same effect Kant and Harris) springs to the defense of virtue, and argue that deception in its many forms destroys trust and social cohesion. In the words of Sam Harris “the opportunity to deceive others is ever-present and often tempting, and each instance of deception casts us under the steepest ethical terrain we’ve ever crossed.” (Harris, 2011)

A lie according to Harris is born when we believe in one thing but intend to communicate another. When we lie, we do so in order that others will form beliefs that are not true; and the more consequential those beliefs (i.e. the more the other’s well-being is dependent on a correct understanding of the actual state of the world), the more consequential, or grievous the lie. By contrast, to speak truthfully is to accurately represent one’s beliefs by communicating what one believes to be true and useful. But this truth we speak of provides no assurance for “accuracy” or the Truth with a capital T (recall the discussion on ethics vs. epistemology). And so it is ultimately the intent to communicate honestly that is the measure of truthfulness. It is also for this reason that Bok and Harris make the argument that by truthfully expressing one’s ignorance on a topic on which they have insufficient knowledge, they are as truthful as they can be in such a scenario.

Deception then can be seen as the umbrella term under which come out-right lying with elaborate ruses or even forged documents; but also other, more innocuous forms of deception which can exist in the form of mere euphemisms or tactical silences. Bok (1999) presents a crucial principle that is diametrically opposed to deception, which she dubs “the principle of veracity”.

Liar vs. Dupe: An Issue of Harm and Freedom

But before we go into veracity, we must first discuss the discrepant perspectives between “liar” and “dupe” (or the party that is deceived). Bok and Harris in-line with Aristotelian thought note that most of the time liars will construct elaborate reasons or end-goals in their own heads in order to excuse their deceptive behavior. They either consciously or sub-consciously believe that they are constructing their machinations in a Machiavellian manner that allows them to achieve “great things” that the dupe or others simply would not understand. Furthermore, and in a rather egoistic sense, they overestimate their own abilities to judge whether or not the occasion calls for a lie or for the truth – either because they believe that they are more intelligent and knowledgeable; or that they have such high moral standards that they know for certain they would never lie unless it is absolutely called-for. Strangely enough, that same liar would never condone being deceived by another. It seems that the choice to lie is one they would like to reserve solely to themselves; while insisting that others be honest – i.e. to be expectant of a phenomenon Bok terms the “free-rider status” – something that cannot logically exist in a world where everybody chooses to behave in this deceptive manner, with these same expectations.

Bok and Harris elaborate by saying that liars will study the advantages and disadvantages of telling their lies in great detail, often invoking special reasons that aim to exonerate themselves by constructing the “well-intentioned” lie. This can take the form of the need to keep the status quo or to protect someone’s feelings etc., often neglecting the inherent hypocrisy in that they would not excuse being lied to under the same circumstances no matter the reasons they are provided with. Hypocrisy aside, here I must briefly introduce the important concepts of harm and freedom. While our liar may take into account the “immediate harm” which results from their lie, against the real or constructed benefits that they want to conjure, they always neglect (by omitting, or by underestimating) the two auxiliary types of harm that accompany every lie:

- The harm that lying does to the liar themselves.
- And above all: the harm that is done to the general level of trust and social cohesion.

Both in Bok and Harris’ view are cumulative and difficult to reverse. And to briefly introduce the concept of freedom: by deceiving another – either through a lie of omission or commission (as presented by Harris, 2011), the liar strips their subject of their freedom, or “freedom-from”, in this case, deception (Lennerfors, 2019, p. 46) to act in the way they would have wanted to act as a free-thinking, unburdened agent in possession of the truth. And to not act in a way they would not have acted because of falsehood; or to not fail to solve a problem they could have solved only based on truthful information. A simple example on this can be a husband finding out that his wife has terminal cancer and deciding that in her best interest, and for her own peace of mind, she should not be informed. The wife would die not having said or done things she may have wanted to say or do had she known of her rapidly oncoming mortality.

The liar is often neglectful of what lying does to his/her own wellbeing, and for lack of a better word, psyche. The great psycho-analyst Carl Jung made it abundantly clear in his works (focusing here on *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 1961) that almost all human neurosis comes from a lack of either ability, or willingness to integrate one’s shadow into the true self; that is, from a refusal to live as one’s authentic self. An inauthentic state of being (inwards deception), while not to be taken lightly, is too deep of an exploration for our needs; and we can instead focus on outward deception. How is the liar affected by his/her own lies? According to Bok (1999), and in the first place, the very fact that he/she knows they lied

affects them negatively. They may take the lie itself as an inroad on their own integrity, creating internal struggle. They may look with suspicion and caution on those they know they had lied to. And if any deception of theirs is to be uncovered, they know that their credibility and “the respect for their word” have been damaged. Bok here critically notes that, paradoxically, while the initial deception may provide the liar with increased power (relative to the dupe(s)), or perceived power – through short-term initial gains; as soon as any of his/her deceptions is uncovered, he/she is left with greatly decreased power. In addition, Bok (1999) and Harris (2011) continue, lies are often never solitary, a first lie must often be accompanied by a second and a third and so on in order to protect the preceding lies, and the pressure on the liar becomes greater each time. Both Bok and Harris make the argument for the “conservation of energy” that accompanies honest being here. In Bok’s words “The sheer energy the liar has to devote to shoring them [lies] up is energy that honest people can dispose of freely.” (Bok, 1999, p. 25); and when Harris argues that knowing we will attempt to tell the truth, no matter the consequences, leaves us with little to prepare for. And knowing that we were truthful in the past leaves us with nothing to keep track of. A more sinister reason for this seemingly inevitable increase in lying is the wearing down of psychological barriers that accompanies deception. In Bok’s view: as one lies, more lies can seem more necessary, less reprehensible; the liar’s ability to judge and make moral distinctions disintegrates, and their perception of their chances of being caught degrades. And even if the liar has no personal sense of integrity (classically defined through the roots of “intact” and “untouched”: Bok, 1999, p. 25) to be destroyed, the chances of being discovered and his/her reputation being sullied with the increasing number of lies is constantly on the rise.

The second type of harm mentioned above is the crucial one. This is because, as Bok and Harris note, deception tends to spread, and will give rise to practices that are very harmful to human communities. As Bok summarizes, lies spread: through imitation, for retaliation, or in order to forestall suspected deception. And as lies spread, trust is damaged – often times irrevocably so. Both Bok and Harris insist that this not mere interpersonal trust on a one-to-one level; rather, this is “social trust” – a social good to be protected as well as the air we breathe and the water we drink. Harris (2011) covers a study that reports that at least 10% of communication between spouses is deceptive; and another that states that at least 38% of encounters between college students contain lies. Another study found that 86% of internet users have fallen victim, at least once, to an untrue news story (CIGI-Ipsos, 2019). This is worrying because, according to Harris, deception and suspicion are two sides of the same coin. As Bok puts it, the people who learn that they have been lied to on an important topic are left resentful, disappointed and chronically suspicious. This is because they feel that their right to act upon “informed choice” has been stripped away from them.

If a mayor is deceived about the need for imposing new taxes, all of the citizens will be harmed as a result, and both the mayor and the citizenry will suffer from this ancillary, chronically suspicious mode-of-being that emerges as a result from their trust being broken. If we observe how deception can be so ubiquitous in modern society, is it a wonder that more than 63% of Americans do not trust their media (Brenan, 2020); and that more than 83% of Americans do not trust the government in Washington D.C. (Pew Research Center, 2019). Bok observed that these governments act in the same way as the individuals do, proclaiming high-sounding aims such as national security or adversary system of justice and always act from a moral high-ground and as if they know what is best for the people who put them in charge – with little to no regard toward informing or involving the latter in a transparent and meaningful way. It is for this reason, Bok continues, that confidence in public officials, and in many cases entire

professions (e.g. journalists, managers, doctors, lawyers...), has been significantly eroded since the 1960s.

The Principle of Veracity

It is here that we can finally introduce the principle of veracity. This principle, presented in Bok (1999, p. 30), springs from Aristotelian thought, and from proving that deception holds an inherent negative weight. All this has its footing in the setting aside of both skepticism and determinism – both interesting angles from which to analyze human behavior; but both ultimately useless if we are to have such a thing as “moral choice”. If we are to do this, we should naturally arrive at the embracing of enlightenment values in the form of freedom and the right to be informed. Here we find that lying, or deception in general, leads to a harming of these values and should therefore require a reason for doing so; while truth-telling does not. This is why Aristotle himself declared “Falsehood is in itself mean and culpable, and truth noble and full of praise” (Aristotle, 1926 in Book IV, section 7). We therefore arrive at a natural imbalance in the evaluation of truth and lying since one must produce a rational argument for why his/her lie is not “mean and culpable” in a particular situation; while truth is naturally good. This inherent imbalance is what Bok refers to as “the principle of veracity”. In her view, it is the overall trust in some degree of veracity that should be the “foundation of relations among human beings” (Bok, 1999, p. 31). And it is when this trust is decreased or shattered that institutions or even entire societies collapse. By following Bok’s (through Aristotle’s) philosophy and starting off from the belief that a lie must only be a last resort, and only then can it be studied in order to be morally justified, we would eliminate a great many lies told out of carelessness or habit or unexamined good intentions, and would therefore arrive at maximal social trust.

Lying in Project Management

Papers that specifically tackle the topic of lying within project management are rare but they do exist. Glass et al. (2009) report that, in the software development project environments they surveyed, lying was found to occur in at least 50% of projects in the worst cases, with two thirds of the project managers personally facing deception in such cases. The most common type of lies was regarding cost or time estimates, with most of the lying being attached to estimates that are reported “too low” as opposed to too high. Flyvbjerg et al. (2002) focused specifically on these types of lies, but in projects related to transportation and infrastructure rather than software development. After studying 258 such projects, they found that in a whopping 9 out of 10 of them, costs were underestimated. The authors stress that such underestimation could not be explained by error, and seems to be best explained by “strategic misrepresentation” i.e. lying. Other types of lies reported by Glass et al. (2009) were lies pertaining to status reporting: where members would employ “overly optimistic” reporting and tell their managers what they wanted to hear (e.g. out of fear, or to look good). Another type was lies told for “political maneuvering” where organization members (particularly those in upper management) would tell lies to improve their political stance within the organization. The paper reports (from the respondents) suggestions toward finding solutions for deception within software project environments: such as management providing incentives for openness and honesty; having interim retrospectives; improving communication e.g. actively encouraging openness and honesty. While other solutions provided by the respondents were less optimistic, proposing to simply punish those found guilty of lying.

III-2 On the Increasing Fragmentation in Modern Projects

This section aims to provide a general overview of the modern project environment, particularly concerning the owners, contractors and consultants on both sides of the equation. This section was added because during the discussions with the respondents, there were many indications of antagonism between the project managers on the owner side of the equation, with the ones on the contractor and subcontractor side. And while these ethical conflicts are covered extensively in the Analysis section, I wish to cover the paper “Clients, Contractors and Consultants” by Berggren et al. published in the 2001 Project Management Journal as it talks in-depth about the “fragmentation” that tends to occur in the modern project environment (with focus on infrastructure and energy projects and megaprojects).

The authors describe a state of affairs where, contrary to the “traditional” project environment where we would have an owner directly dealing with a contractor; and where coordination, management and knowledge transfer were controllable and accounted for, “modern” project environments are becoming increasingly fragmented. Mainly because, not only the owners are down-sizing and outsourcing their labor, design and management functions to outside subcontractors and consultants, but also the large contractors themselves are had started doing the same. Below you will find a breakdown provided by the authors. The one on the bottom has been edited to fit the scenarios that are mostly seen with the respondents I interviewed.

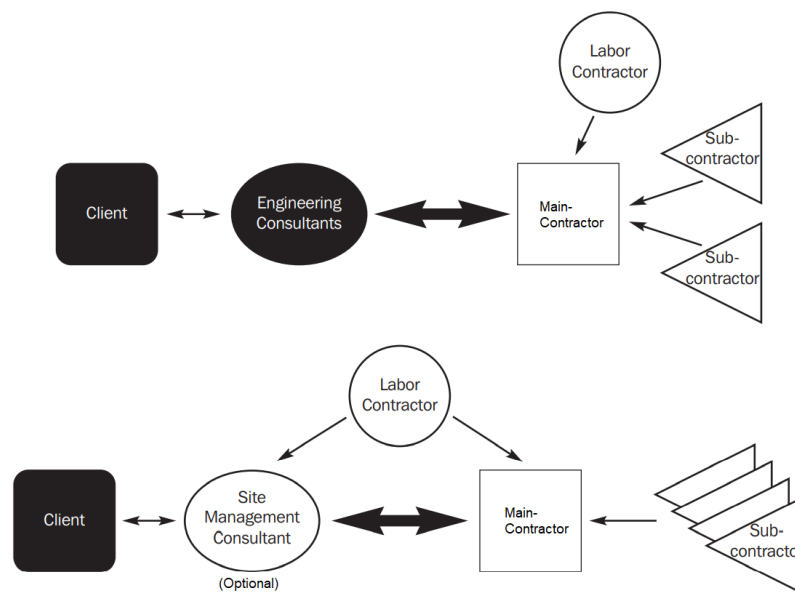


Figure 1: Typical modern project structure – credit to Berggren et al. (2001); edited

The authors explore this fragmentation and the effects that it has on projects – especially those of the “non-recurring” type: where the client and the contractor do not deal with each other on a sustained basis. The main consequences the authors report are lack of coordination and good communication protocols which take the form of excessive bureaucracy, unclear responsibilities, unintended changes in scope for the contractor, abrupt changes to corporate management policies; all exacerbated by the “problem of the

absent customer”: where consultants start taking too many liberties and start seeing themselves as “enforcers” in order to acquire and maintain a reputation for being “tough on contractors” and so on. Or the opposite is seen where consultants, being employed in a temporary capacity, simply do not care as much for the quality of deliverables as the owners would. And for knowledge transfer, the authors report that it is often not in the best interest of the subcontractors to provide their employers with the knowledge that was gained during the project. This quote from a respondent in the study (Berggren et al., 2001, p. 46) highlights this perfectly:

“[The main contractor] cannot learn very much from me and my experience...I keep my secrets of course. Well, we write a report when the project is finished, but I want to be good at this and I want [main contractor] to be dependent on me. So I don’t want to teach them too much.”

Not only that, the authors add that projects by their very nature: arising temporarily to achieve a specific goal during a unique assignment with strict timelines, already suffer when it comes to “organizational learning” and that knowledge transfer is difficult to accomplish as it is. But that this fragmentation is adding salt to the wound with no consideration of the consequences for long-term project performance. It makes project management more difficult; adds needless boundaries with every new round of decentralization with project managers having to find ways to cut through these boundaries between countless divisions and profit centers in order to be able to coordinate comprehensive customer deliveries. The authors propose a very serious question: Is this incessant trend toward outsourcing and fragmentation (from both sides of the project) being done because the advantages of staff reduction is dwarfing the problems of disintegration and divergent incentives?

III-3 The Social Networks View of Project Management

Another interesting topic to be explored, especially given that every single respondent in this study elaborated on their project management work being highly relational and dependent on communications and dealings with internal and external stakeholders, is the “social networks” view of project management. Simply explained, it is to view projects as a series of interconnected social networks. By referring to the mainstream literature on the topic, such as Pryke (2017), we find that while this view does not wish to completely breakaway from the traditional/conventional view of project management, it does strengthen the argument for a focus on studying the lived experience of actors within the project environment. Under this view, the relationships between external suppliers and the project organization; and the relationships and power dynamics between actors within the project organization themselves simply become the focus. The reader of these ideas is encouraged to envisage projects as networks of relationships; and to carefully study these networks as well as the systems which encapsulate them in order to arrive at what enables successful/profitable projects (and what causes unsuccessful ones). Ideas like how the actual, on-the-ground implementation of projects involves activities that are mostly hidden from view, and so can be difficult to identify or quantify and therefore manage are presented. Pryke (2017) in particular cites power, manipulation and exploitation as important factors to consider when studying the “hidden networks” which underlie the functional systems that design and deliver projects. The book also makes the argument that networks in project work are “complex” in a unique way (more complex than other fields in social network studies) due to the fact that projects are “multi-functional” (from design and procurement contracts all the way to execution and hand-over); and also due to the rapid transition that is required of the actors coming into a project, as well as the temporary nature of projects – making important knowledge transfer difficult. Crucially, the author of this book actually shares the pragmatist views mentioned before in arguing that projects must start dealing with uncertainty in a better

way: as in projects should always be defined and executed with flexibility in mind, especially in nascent stages. Furthermore it laments the current state of project management as being too alike the military hierarchies of the past as opposed to facing the highly interconnected and flat work environments of which we find ourselves part today. This book takes the perspective of the individual actor within a project organization; rather than the view of the organization as an actor. This enables the author to explore some critical concepts such as the difference between individual relationships outside work vs. at work; personality types and how they affect performance within the project; and power. It arrives at the sad realization that the personality types which encourage employment as well as promotion within the organization are quite different from those which enable and solidify networks. As an example, empathetic/generous individuals do well to establish and strengthen network relations but struggle in their endeavors for self-promotion; while narcissistic/egotistical/opportunistic individuals are quite deleterious to networks, but often find themselves climbing up the ranks. As for power, which is a very important concept under this view, the author argues that the very existence and the “location” of power is actually the way by which networks organize and sustain themselves during a project. However, the author is wary about using traditional terms like “leadership” and “management” when talking about networks in modern projects and introduces in their stead alternative terms like “facilitation” and “enabling”. This is because, the author argues, we should start looking at what actually needs to be done; and at the role, personality traits, behavior patterns etc. of each actor in the network in relation to doing it. And as for relationships outside of work vs. at work, concepts such as the effectiveness of a good personality, humor and engaging in recreational activities within the social network of the organization are explored.

Ultimately, works like Pryke (2017) wish to argue that conceptualizing projects as multiple layers of functional networks is valuable because it can lead to higher success rates for projects in the future. They argue that the actors which come onto the stage to perform project work are being faced with a reality which is quite different from the static one described in “contracts and protocols”; and that these actors influence both the systems through which the project is delivered, and each other. They stress the “transient” nature of projects in that the environment is not static but constantly transforming and adapting to deal with the demands of the project making project-specific networks much more complex than other social networks. All of this makes it easy to see why focusing on the relationships and dynamics between individual actors within the project organization, as well as between the project organization and outside actors can be valuable moving forward.

IV. Methodology

So far in this paper, the reader has been presented with an account of the key concepts and deliberations in the field of ethics within project management. We saw how there is a conventional vs. alternative split when it comes to the conceptualization, study, and practice of project management. The second research aim builds on the concepts and terminology investigated during the Main Theory section in order to conduct a phenomenological study on a group of experienced project managers working in different environments and industries with the aim of seeing how ethics permeate their respective lived experience.

As a reminder, the phenomenological study was chosen because we saw how the positivist; being; theoretical science approach of the conventional metalanguage (the project management “industry”) with its PERT evaluation techniques; focus on metrics and measurement; set milestones and standardized practices and procedures etc. has thus far failed to encapsulate the true nature of the managing of projects: evident in the rising rates of project failure across multiple industries. This failure, argue authors like Rolfe et al. (2016), van der Hoorn and Whitty (2015), Cicmil and Hodgson (2006b) (borrowing terminology from thinkers like Heidegger and Thomas Kuhn) arises in the form of existential disruptions facing the practitioners, due to the insistence of the metalanguage on utilizing the same frameworks and tools to assuage the failure, which are causing the failure in the first place. This sequence from my coverage of Rolfe et al. summarizes this point:

‘...when using a given technique that is predicated upon a practice’s fundamental principles and it consistently fails to yield a result the practice predicts, then it must be assumed that the practice is internally inconsistent – in a way that cannot be resolved by the normal techniques of the very same practice, because those very techniques rely on the coherence of the practice for their efficacy.’

Furthermore, these authors (and others like Bredillet, Lennerfors, and as we saw, Coeckelbergh again in line with Heidegger) dislike the “detached” approach where there exist a (subject – object) duality, averring that for both practical matters such as designing and implementing codes of practice or ethical conduct; and for theoretical matters such as trying to understand or analyze the practice (/the “world” and its underlying conditions, tools and actors), we need to start from within – as infused within the world. And lastly, despite many authors within the field discussing the merits of adopting a phenomenological approach in order to arrive at a deeper understanding of the complexities of the lived experience of the project manager, a purely phenomenological study on a number of project management practitioners has not yet been attempted, which is one of the main reasons for the existence of this paper.

According to Caelli (2000), when approaching a topic with phenomenology in mind, there exist two main frameworks: the American phenomenological tradition and the Continental one. To summarize the two:

- European phenomenologists tend to insist on the search for objective truth: in other words, the studied lived experience is seen as a tool to access description of phenomena in their primordial form – that is, the search for the objective through the studying of subjective realities. Hence, operating under such a lens, questions like “Is this what the phenomenon *really* like?” are valid (evident in Husserlian thought, like Husserl, 1931). This is because (as thinkers in line with this approach like Pickles, 1985 argue) by accessing original data directly from our subconscious i.e. without cognitive reflection, the data is somehow closer to some objective ideal.

- American phenomenology researchers tend to disagree. They see the act of self-reflection itself as part and parcel of the experience, and therefore no further from any objective notion of truth (if there even exists one). In fact, in phenomenological papers like Henderson and Brouse (1991), such descriptions are considered integral regardless argues Caelli (2000). And this is why, she continues, according to the American tradition, the focus is on the exploration and description of every day experience itself regardless of whether they are about immediate experience, or about experience that has already been reflected upon by the person doing the subsequent verbalizing.

It follows that the Continental approach is more in line with a participant observation study, where the researcher would observe an experienced project manager for an extended period of time. The researcher could study the respondent's behavior and actions with minimal interruption and then come to their own conclusions based on what the respondent does, not what the respondent claims she does. However, within the same time frame, such an approach would pigeonhole the researcher to one respondent leading to losing out on a wider coverage of other project managers working in other industries and damaging claims of generalisability onto the wider industry (which typically tends to be strained in qualitative research as it is: Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 316). Furthermore, by eliminating the elements of self-reflection from, and deliberation with the respondents, we are potentially losing out on much needed unique insight into the respondents' worlds and experiences – insight that is particularly valuable when the researcher intends to allow the respondents themselves to conceptualize and describe their own world. Another point against participant observation is that the respondent could still alter her behavior when she knows she is being observed, and act more in line with what she thinks the researcher wants to see negating any potential pluses toward subconscious objectivity.

With that in mind, this paper adopts an American phenomenological approach. More specifically, it utilizes the Hycner (1985) “phenomenological analysis” methodology. This is primarily because of the:

- a. Congruent sample size: this will be covered in an upcoming part on sampling.
- b. The methodology's focus on being as comprehensive as possible in responding to the whole phenomena, setting aside blind adherence to theory, instead encouraging the researcher to utilize whatever concepts and methods that are as faithful as possible in describing the human experience with the least amount of dilution above all else.
- c. The methodology does not allow itself to get bogged down with complex and abstract definitions of “phenomenology”; rather, the respondents are allowed to define the phenomena for themselves. The respondents are afforded as much freedom as possible in describing their own worlds and how they see these worlds interplay with the phenomena being investigated.

Hycner, annoyed with the lack of “standardization” when it comes to phenomenological studies composed his painstaking fifteen-step analysis methodology. Building on Keen (1975), Hycner understands that phenomenologists should rightfully be worried about their research method becoming “reified”: as in becoming a “cookbook” with a set of instructions. So he presents his steps as being more in the nature of guidelines that have arisen out of years of teaching phenomenological research to his students. These guidelines are meant to enlighten the researcher to a number of key issues and concepts that should be kept in mind to help them in their pursuit toward being true to the phenomenon; rather than a strict cookbook. The best way to concisely describe it is: Hycner's fifteen-step phenomenology has its

foundation in thematic analysis, but adds on top of that a few core concepts and a more rigid approach in the pursuit of arriving at a distillation of the phenomena: as the subjects in this world perceive it.

Instead of listing all of the steps, I will refer you to the below diagram which aims at summarizing the essence of the entire approach, while describing the main concepts that make this approach unique when compared to traditional thematic analysis.

- Bracketing: The researcher must “bracket” his/her preconceptions while they are listening to, or reading the transcripts. Hycner repeats how crucial this step is when performing this type of analysis in order to arrive at the true, underlying meaning of the phenomena. In his words “Anyone can hear the words”; but to truly listen for the deep, underlying meanings “as they eventually emerge from the event as a whole is to have adopted an attitude of openness to the phenomenon in its inherent meaningfulness” (Hycner, 1985, p. 280). It means that the researcher must leave behind his/her preconceptions; his/her own meanings and interpretations especially as they build up during the process of reading the transcripts of the conversations. The researcher does this in order to let the event emerge as a meaningful whole. Simply put: We can use the “matrices” of that person’s world in order to eventually understand the meaning. But during the act of listening to/reading the actual data, we want to arrive at what the person is really saying; not what we expect that person to say.
- In this type of analysis we look at every word; every sentence; every inflection – even non-verbal or “para-linguistic” levels of communication in our search for meaning. This is why Hycner calls the smallest unit of analysis, or the building blocks of the analysis process “units of meaning”. This is also why you will find exclamation points or words that are *italicized* in the quotations from the respondents, as I try to capture their emotion or highlight the exact words they chose to place the stress on. Please note that quotations that are italicized in their entirety are not included in this as that is simply a design choice.
- The above-mentioned units of meaning, when the analysis process is started, point toward what Hycner calls the “essence” of what is being said: which can be thought of as the first level in the finding of themes and are directly attributed to one or more units of meaning being verbalized by the respondent.

to his mind is not only useful, but also mandatory if we really want to achieve deep understanding. Then it becomes evident that even if we adopt a Continental definition (as per Caelli, 2000) of phenomenology, this approach should still be successful in extracting that subconscious goldmine.

- Only after we have treated every single respondent as living his/her own phenomenological process and arrived at the finalized individual stories through this feedback process, do we go on to find the “overarching; general themes” (isolating “unique” themes in the process), and go on to “contextualize” them within the overall context or “horizon” from whence they came (Hycner, 1985, p. 293). (This is basically the Discussion section).
- And then finally, we can write the “Composite Summary” which aims to arrive at the aggregate; total “essence of the phenomenon” being investigated: describing the “world in general, as being experienced by the participants” (ibid, p. 294). This is basically an aggregate summary of the entire Analysis.

After the Composite Summary, a section titled Reflections on Methodology and Other Considerations is included, where the strengths and weaknesses; quality considerations of this methodology; ethical considerations are reflected upon.

There are a few important notes that I must turn the reader’s attention to before starting the Analysis:

- Due to the particularly sensitive nature of the area of study (as it pertains to the person’s ethics; stories on moral dilemmas etc.), the respondents were informed that their personal information would be anonymous. Even firm names and country names have been redacted from the quotes included in the Analysis. They were also informed that stories that can be traced back to a specific respondent would require explicit permission from the respondent prior to including them in the Analysis. Also in the invitation that was sent to all respondents, it was explicitly mentioned that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers when it comes to these deliberations; that the researcher is simply attempting to see how things are in the real world and not make any judgments about their moral character or how they chose to deal with specific ethical situations etc.
- At the start of each section; after each respondent’s anonymous letter e.g. RespA, the reader will find an “O” or a “C” or a “CO” followed by a number e.g. RespA-CO32. The “O” corresponds to them working on the “owner” (/client) side. C for “contractor” and “CO” for having worked with both (and currently working with an “owner”). The number represents the number of years of experience the respondent has had working in project environments. It will become apparent, as the Analysis section unfolds, why the owner/contractor and years of experience differentiators were deemed helpful.
- In the Appendix, the reader can find a sample of overarching themes being identified from units of meaning.
- Crucially, the finalized Results section has been composed in a particular way: instead of including seven consecutive essays of what was said in each interview (i.e. the seven “individual stories” as per Hycner), I included the element of cross-referencing with other respondents and to theory in a somewhat comparative narrative; sometimes even grouping two respondents together (this was done after all the “independent” considerations were finalized). Such elements can be found in traditional thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), as well as Hycner’s “overall themes”. This is because I

believe that it makes for a more engaging read, while still keeping true to each respondent's unique understanding of, and experience with the phenomena.

Sampling

The sampling approach can best be described as a mix between “opportunity sampling” and “snowball sampling” – with an element of “criterion sampling” (as defined in Bryman and Bell, 2007, p. 391). The criterion element is limited to having a minimum of five years of experience within a project environment (and obviously as currently working in a management position in such an environment – more on this later). Three project managers were approached from the researcher's past professional networks, and the rest (four) were arrived at through first-hand or second-hand referrals. For this type of research and area of study, I make the argument that opportunistic sampling; or talking to people with a certain degree of familiarity with the researcher can actually be a boon, rather than a bane:

- Trusting the researcher's character encouraged them to open up when telling real-life stories on ethical dilemmas and uncomfortable situations (such as attempted bribes etc.) It also encouraged them to talk about stories where they felt they were in the wrong themselves, since they do not feel they are being judged by an external authority.
- With respondents who are less familiar with the researcher, I felt the need to establish rapport (as Bryman and Bell, 2007, p. 428 put it) prior to being able to extract the reality surrounding the ethical matters being discussed. This was not required at all with the respondents I had a certain degree of familiarity with.

The respondents had a variety of years of experience within projects “6; 7; 10; 15; 15; 32; 36” as well as work(ed) in different industries and fields “Oil and Gas; Construction; Supply-chain; Solar panels; Civil work; Aviation projects; Software development within the medical industry”. Not all respondents at present have the official title “Project Manager”: two of them have different titles. One works in upper management in a project-based firm; and the other works as a “senior supply-chain manager” but mostly, and most of the time exclusively, alongside project managers in project environments. Descriptions of why their particular input was unique and necessary can be found in the Results section.

The sample size is “7” respondents which is more than adequate for this type of phenomenological analysis. In fact, Hycner (1985, p. 295) emphasizes that the amount of data that is generated from each transcript with this type of analysis can be overwhelming: therefore the sample size should be kept at a minimum. The data he used for his paper came from a dissertation with a sample size of 3. Despite this comparatively larger sample size causing the Results section in particular to be quite lengthy, the researcher still included the individual stories as no summary, regardless of how well-contextualized, can do each justice. And the individual stories are the embodiment of what makes this phenomenological analysis unique and valuable.

Interview Guide

To remind you, RQ: “How do ethics permeate the lived experience of the modern project manager?”

Interview Questions:

1: What does “ethics” mean to you? (Alternative form: When I say the word “ethics”, what comes to mind?)

1a: (in case of no eventual coverage of “project management”): How would you link this with your project management work?

1b: (in case of no mention of reasoning): Do you think “ethics” are important? Why/Why not – How so...?

2: [Give short breakdown of traditional project lifecycle]: In which project phase(s) do ethical dilemmas most frequently arise? And why do you think that is?

3: [Give simple and short summary or description of “split I ethics” vs. “split II ethics”.] Which school of thought would you say you fall under now; or is it somewhere in the middle, or perhaps outside?

3a: And has it always been like this? [“Recall early in your career” – encourage talk of how/if his/her view changed as their career progressed?]

3b: (in case not already covered): So how do you tackle ethical dilemmas now? And has it always been like this? [“Recall early in your career” – encourage talk of how/if his/her view changed as their career progressed?]

4: Can you elaborate on the most recent ethical dilemma you faced in your project management work?

(Alternative form in case uncomfortable sharing: Can you elaborate on the most recent ethical dilemma you witnessed or are familiar with (not faced personally)?)

5: Can you elaborate on the most significant ethical dilemma you believe you faced in your career?

(Alternative form in case uncomfortable sharing: Can you elaborate on the most significant ethical dilemma you witnessed or are familiar with (not faced personally)?)

6: [Highly depends on answers – attempt to get definitions and elaborations on some of the prolific concepts/themes they chose to talk about a lot]: E.g. Can you elaborate on what you mean when you say “honesty”, “wisdom”, “integrity”, “pragmatism”...?

7: Are there other questions you think I should have asked you? (Alternative form: Is there anything else you would like to add?)

Question 3 was often-times superfluous as four of the seven respondents started talking about “codes; ethical codes; standards; codes of conduct...” in opposition to their pragmatic way of dealing; virtue; personal codes... on their own, and the conversation went from there. With the remainder, I tried to explain these two splits in the minimum amount of words until they went “Aha...” and started elaborating on their own ideas of what these two schools meant and where they felt they fall. Only with one particular

respondent did I have to extensively elaborate on what I meant by split I; codes; standards; instruction... and split II; pragmatic dealing; discernment/deliberation within a specific context...

As hinted at by questions 6 and 7, the semi-structured nature of the interviews was oftentimes quite loose. I would say that with two respondents, the question-by-question structure was mostly followed. With three respondents, the ideas went back and forth, between and across questions (I still present the Results in line with the sequence of the questions). And with two respondents, the structure was hardly there, especially when they felt they had a lot to say about a particular aspect or topic within ethics in project management. What I described was for the first interviews: for the second and further interviews with each respondent, the structure was not present at all as we would mostly talk about particular areas of elaboration; and it only returned during the last “confirmation interview” where I would go over coverage of their answers in a question-by-question format, and hear their respective feedback.

As mentioned earlier, further discussion on methodological considerations; strengths and weaknesses; quality considerations; ethical considerations etc. can be found in the last section of the paper, Reflections on Methodology and Other Considerations.

V. Analysis

V-1 Results – Individual Stories

RespA-O32

The individual story of RespA-CO32 is that of ethics as a personal struggle. Immediately upon asking Q1, I was greeted with quotes like “...which means all those principles that I have to abide in order not to undermine myself in my eyes” and “It is a pride. A challenge. I don’t [care] about RespA, but I could never undermine the way the sons and daughters of RespA look at him”. You will find that for most of RespA’s descriptions of ethics in a personal vein, it is dynamic – as in, he is describing a striving that is continuously happening. With the exception of when he describes the end-goal “*ethics for me is to reach the point at the end of the day where I can say RespA, bravo, you can sleep well tonight.*” This theme of having a personal code by which you continuously abide (evident in quotes like “*In all phases, your compass should be on*”) in order to reach a state of peace repeated a lot during the discussion. When the discussion was steered into a professional direction (during Q1), it changed toward focusing on themes like getting the job done; ends pertaining to the project: “[And in business,] *Ethics means assuming responsibility; recognizing the mistakes; providing the best all the time; providing the best solution*”, but always with this personal touch that never leaves RespA’s attention “...while thinking that your work and your performance is your dignity.” And here we see for the first time (but not for the last time as this will become a major theme) a unification of personal and professional ethics. In application, you can find this in quotes like “*You will treat others as you want to be treated. You will handle the money of others as you will handle your own money*” where it can be deduced that RespA has a personal code of sorts that is derived from the “personal” and applied onto the “professional”. This may seem common-sense at the moment, but some other respondents answered with a clear split in mind between personal and professional ethics. It is worthy of note that RespA is currently on the owner’s side of the equation, and as the Analysis section unfolds, it will become apparent why this is an important distinction to highlight. It seemed to me that no matter where the conversation took us, RespA’s reference point for ethics was always grounded in, and always circled back to, an extremely personal place that is always evident in his dealings in the workplace e.g. when asked to assign a rating out of 10 for the importance of ethics in the workplace: “200/10...This is the only thing that you shouldn't or couldn't lose. This is your pride. This is your *everything*” obviously linking his ethics with his very identity – if not survival. When asked during the second interview to elaborate on this, RespA basically explained that it is really out of “necessity” that the PM needs to be ethical because that is basically where he derives his “power” and “identity” from. In an upcoming part, we will discuss an incident where RespA was offered a bribe. In the second meeting, he told me that the offering party offered him that bribe “because” of his ethics: but that if he had accepted it, he would be “*reduced to nothing. Worthless...the reason they wanted to give me the bribe in the first place would disappear.*” Presumably because he would have lost the aforementioned “power” and “identity” that the briber was ostensibly after in the first place.

For Q2, RespA supplied the interviewer with a standard answer for those who place the most importance on, and therefore believe that the highest number of ethical dilemmas arise during, the planning phase (or, more accurately pre-execution because he mentions “planning; design” etc.) “*I believe you play most of the game during the preparation. Okay? The planning, the design*” while also providing solid reasoning for this (very similar reasoning supplied by other respondents): “In all phases, they have their own goals. And everything is successful when the goals *for planning and design* are successful”. So RespA sees this phase as some kind of origin phase that is a reference point for everything that comes after, and this is

confirmed by other respondents. As for the execution phase, RespA seemingly contradicts himself by describing it as the phase where most conflict happens (but this will be elaborated on in a moment), *"When entering the implementation phase: it is like entering the bottle of conflict. In the implementation phase, you start dealing with contractors, colleagues, other departments -- where none of them share your views about ethics whatsoever."* Some major concepts and themes (that will re-appear across all interviews) start emerging here: the particularly relational aspect of project management evident in dealing with internal stakeholders within the firm and external stakeholders, as well as evaluating/seeing/describing contractors' ethics in a negative light e.g. *"I have nothing against contractors but I have a saying: the best contractor has killed his mother for a buck."* But the latter, after my second meeting with RespA, when he revealed to me that he had worked as a contractor for over 11 years, turned out to be misleadingly superficial. And so I will expand fully on this angle during my interview with an actual contractor during Interview 5. For now (and with all respondents before RespE), we will find negative encounters and an overall negative view (as it concerns ethics) from the owners toward the contractors to be widespread. Also RespA continuously highlights a personal striving/conflict manifesting in one continuously fighting for one's goals in the midst of an uncaring world. As well as the very important theme of subjective or contrasting ethics which is further highlighted by this quote from RespA *"The ethics in planning, you have to ask yourself: Are you working for yourself? Are you working for a government? A big company? Directly with the owner? With your own money? It depends on where you are"* where it seems that your role; or the angle from which you are approaching the project has a direct influence on your ethical framework. *"Personally, I work with others' money, and accordingly I have to treat them as if they were my own money -- in all the phases"*: Here we see again this theme of merging the "personal" with the "professional" to arrive at RespA's personal code, and also the theme of tying "ethics" with integrity in the handling of money; or transactions etc. which I think explains why RespA placed the weight of ethical importance on the planning/design phase where most of that happens according to him – despite seeing the execution phase as an all out war so-to-speak (we will see how this contrasts with the other respondents who mostly take an opposite direction to RespA). However, RespA ultimately stressed that he believes ethics to be "indivisible" and so *"In all phases, your compass should be on."* (A theme which is prolific across interviews.)

It is worth mentioning that here, RespA provides some unique insight on what happens during all phases of the project – insight that can be translated into some kind of job description of what project management involves. This is heavily embroiled in how "power" and "responsibility" are defined by this respondent, and how they interplay. *"If you ask my team without my presence: Who has the power in technical department? They will say: This is variable and it's not within one person. It is in the hands of the one who provides the best ideas...But I assume all the responsibility for implementing all the ideas"*. This is tied with ethics by another quote *"But you have to be ethical to afford that. Not to steal any idea of others. Assume all the responsibility but take none of the credit."* Not only are we getting unique insights into RespA's definition of project management which is heavily linked with the extraction of good ideas from the project team (further highlighted by quotes like *"If you don't allow your people to express themselves: it is like ordering a pizza and saying to the delivery guy here is your 10 euros, now take your pizza with you"* and *"At the end of the day: We wear clean clothes and sit in an air conditioning office. The only thing I have to do is read and write and talk -- nothing else. My input is ideas: when I employ engineers it is for their ideas."*), but we are also seeing a strong link between his perceived competence as a project manager i.e. in the successful extraction of good ideas from his team – with ethics; that is, that you cannot achieve all of that without exhibiting good professional ethics: here, in the form of taking all the responsibility while claiming none of the credit, presumably leading to some kind of established trust,

that therefore propagates good performance from his team, and by extension leads to good performance from him as their manager. It is worth mentioning that when analyzing two other interviews (Respondents B and C), we will see how this is perceived from the opposite end as they describe their managers who have similar philosophies to that of RespA.

To end the Q2 part of my discussion with RespA, he summarizes all in a quote that highlights many of the important themes we covered “The aim is always to produce the best result. To add the maximum value in a tangible and non tangible manner. And there are redlines: *Ethics* are redlines.” How he links ethics with his competence as a PM. How, in a professional sense, ethics is tied with an end: to achieve the best result/most value... for the project (And look for this theme repeat many times across different interviews). As well as RespA’s stress on how central/crucial ethics are.

When presented with Q3 (regarding split I vs. split II), RespA replied with “I do not look at it like this or this. I look at them in segways: When I go to a new environment I assume that *nobody* is [virtuous]. And my work is to transform them *all* to be [virtuous]. And I always succeed in this”. This sequential description of going from one type of ethics to another may seem out of place in this quote as it is more about describing an experienced PM’s duty to instill a sense of ethics in colleagues, but RespA does a good job of explaining what he means by all of this later on. Also, in this section, RespA seemingly contradicts himself on multiple occasions. But I found that as the discussion went on during both this and further questions, these contradictions tended to resolve. For example, upon hearing my description, RespA assigns the second school of thought a negative value:

“This is a very interesting discussion by the way: there are certain things which you couldn't see them in a different manner *and* the ethical things *are not subjective*: All the religions, all the philosophies, all the traditions, most of them have a *consensus* on what is ethical or not. The religions have the ten commands. The issue here is to be spontaneous? Now, this is the hypocrisy and the lack of ethics. When you allow yourself to have deviations because you are the boss but you do not allow the others. This is discrimination.”

But in the same section he says this: “So the ‘code’ for me is not the code of PMI code of ethics or this or that; it is from *my code*. I treat others as I would like to be treated and I fight always to the maximum extent to achieve this.” A few things here:

- RespA will on multiple occasions describe ethics as being “objective”; while in the same breath, always describing a personal code of ethics that he abides by, and that others, for the most part, do not have e.g. “Effectively I see the code as from myself, from my nature. I couldn't for example justify any kind of lie: small, black, white, big, *no!*” and “when I start working with new people I assume that they do not have these principles. And my job is to instill these principles”. And “So accordingly, I don’t have a dilemma, whenever I see something, it is an objective thing: is this allowed? Or is this not allowed?”
- RespA, while maintaining his personal code of ethics; and while insisting that he does not use standardized codes of ethics e.g. PMI, IPMA etc., still insists that (what he termed) theory is very important: “*Now I am not going to pretend to know these codes of ethics by heart. Or that I apply them in my day to day: but look here there is something very very important...at the end, books and theory come from reality – from practice; but what is from practices that go to theory? The good things. So theory is practically the best thing to put into reality.*”

So how does RespA bridge these potential gaps? It is worthy of note that RespA is quite unique in this regard. Most of the respondents, with a few notable exceptions, simply side with one philosophy or another (but usually while giving allowances to the other or by proposing a more straightforward marriage between the two). Let us examine his train of thought:

As the discussion unfolds, it slowly becomes clear what RespA is trying to describe. He sees professional codes of ethics and conduct (what he continuously terms “theory” in a general sense – and that itself should serve as a hint) as, ultimately, a noble but nevertheless unreachable ideal. But that ideal, in his, view should still be “respected” and always “approached”. There are many quotes that served as hints throughout the interview e.g. “So theoretical things are the *golden ideal*. And I should not lower the bar to 70 cms and then jump over that and be happy with myself. I should set the bar as the Olympics have done and jump over it, and it's okay even if I take the bronze medal” and “I have to know what is the best. I do not have to reach it, but I have to know that it exists.”

Also, this I think explains RespA’s repeated descriptions of ethics as a “process” that involves making “mistakes”, and how the good PM has the “right” to make mistakes but also the “responsibility” to recognize and fix them “*The only right I would not give up is the right to be wrong...This is my right; but it is also my responsibility to recognize and improve on those mistakes*”. Recall how Coeckelbergh describes the “moral expert” (the one who no longer needs instruction and can “improvise; be creative”, the one who exhibits “moral maturity”) becomes so through his/her lived experience: through embodied “trial and error”; through the “tacit knowledge” they have accrued. And here as well, I would like to remind you of RespA’s continuous mention of a “compass”: “*In all phases, your compass should be on*”. After the structured part of the interview (during the section which I call Q6 where I inquire about some of the specifically unique concepts the respondents chose to talk about), I came to learn that these golden ideals are necessary to RespA precisely because they are the way by which he calibrates this “compass”:

“This is the ideal; the target to be approached...and never insult something by saying ‘it is just theory’ because the best in practice becomes theory. Don’t become like the wolf who wanted grapes but found them too high up the tree and said ‘oh it’s just gravel’...‘oh this is just theory’: *No!* Theory is excellent, but it is not achievable. But if I don’t know what is the target then how will I approach it? How will I calibrate my compass?”

And by following this same train of thought, we can also resolve the objective vs. subjective schism that seemed to be omnipresent throughout the interview. RespA (also during my long discussion with him after the regular interview) explains exactly what he meant by “objective”:

“...But the objective never changes neither with geography nor time. But of course after discovering that something is wrong you can change it to the right...If you find millions and millions who all agree on that this is right and this is wrong, then the sample has become so large that the subjective becomes almost objective. Then we get what we call *wrong* and *right*.”

So even the “objective” is not seen as absolute: it is just temporarily objective and dictated by a contemporary overwhelming majority. More importantly (in a theme that will also be discussed by RespG), “we as engineers have the advantage...but also the obligation” to “change” our ways once we find out that what we had been doing all along “was wrong”: in technical, societal and ethical considerations, according to RespA. Recall how Coeckelbergh continuously stressed that the moral

change he is describing is dependent on the cultural horizon that is already there and on the moral language and the material-technological structures and moral geographies that are already in place. That we are never starting from a blank slate, and are always cultivating; growing as these landscapes evolve.

And returning to the original scope of Q3, we now see that RespA is trying to propose a middle-ground of sorts (which we will find to be an immensely important and widely recurring theme) between the two schools of thought. Simply put, RespA proposes that one's highly personal framework for ethical dealings in the workplace – which comes from experience – itself is the method by which you approach the higher ideal (that to his mind is represented by “theory” or actual professional standards).

“...if you have a certain *frame*, not necessarily from a *law* or a *code*, but a frame for yourself to handle the situation...you will create some sort of consistency and you will continue adding value adding value adding value and you will see the mountain going up...”

And the “bridge” between the two comes to RespA in the form of “consistency” (quite unique to this respondent and RespG, and omnipresent in this interview); going so far as to say that many people “fake” being ethical simply by acting in a consistent manner:

“But all the time with consistence. Sometimes ethical [action] is...done by someone who is really not ethical but consistent in the way he does things, in a predictable manner, to give the impression of being ethical.”

Giving credence to predictability i.e. that once you deliberate on an ethical dilemma, you do not solve a very similar dilemma in a completely different way. That some respect be given to the precedents that you set for yourself. This theme will return when studying RespG's experiences as well. To summarize this part, we can absorb the following quote, where we can see RespA's focus on ethics as a dynamic and highly-personal continuous process – that while imperfect, still should aim at an ideal:

“To do righteous action and get the wrong result? Or to do wrongful action and get a righteous result?...really the best you can do is to provide the best from start to finish in an ethical manner while having the right to be wrong but also the responsibility to recognize it. This is ethics.”

As for Q4, which is meant with discerning the lived experience of the modern project manager as it pertains to his/her application of ethics or dealings with ethical dilemmas at present, RespA demonstrated a certain hesitance to talk about specific situations (a hesitance that was shared by two more respondents from the “owner” side; as opposed to the contractors who were very open – even sharing details about situations they felt they had been in the wrong). However, RespA generously provided me with general descriptions, stories from pop culture, as well as parables which are cleverly designed to serve as parallels to situations that he has to deal with on a daily basis – without out-right spelling out the situations.

The two main themes I derived from this part of the discussion with RespA were quite unique. The first main theme here can be introduced by this quote, which he opened with “I told you before when I start working with a group of people...my target is to transform them...but I am not responsible if this will not be achieved because *you can* be the *best* tailor. But if the fabric is bad you will never ever succeed to have a good suit.” This quote was followed by a question from RespA where he basically asked me, if I came back to my car to find the window broken and something stolen, what would I do? I replied “*Call the cops, perhaps?*” To which he replied “*It is not personal: It is a disease of society and this was just a*

symptom of that disease infecting you. And to go and fight a disease that somebody else should have taken care of doesn't make sense." This non-interventionist attitude took me by surprise as it seemed defeatist and pessimistic in contrast to the inspired and passionate descriptions of ethics RespA was previously generously providing. So I decided to probe further, and I am glad I did because I started to understand what he was getting at. Basically RespA was not really talking about a simple act of vandalism to my car; he was telling me how he viewed things within his projects. A later quote, on being too involved/concerned with the actions of people operating within the project (excluding his project team): "You become victim of a situation, you become some sort of an idiot person in a situation you don't want to be in, you always suffer: Why he did this? Why he did that? You will drive yourself crazy. If I see somebody *not from my team* stealing one *million dollars*, I will not say anything, I will not get involved. I am not inspector of other's behavior." The non-interventionist nuance will be introduced in the next section, but from this we can add to RespA's job description of project management. RespA then says something that immediately reminds me of Epictetus' writings (please refer to the coverage on Stoicism):

"I am responsible only for things within my control and about my attitude. I have suffered in the past because of that, now I lead my team by example and with consistency consistency. That's how you transform the people. And don't expect too much or too little, you are only disappointed when the expectation is high and the actual is less. So the way to protect yourself is to fit realistic expectations – but high enough."

Not only that, but this quote was coupled with a parable that RespA told me where the moral was that sometimes you need to accept things that are not up to your ethical maxims, but then gradually build toward your ethical maxims. Parallels were drawn to Winston Churchill's dealings with the USSR during WWII: War-time Prime Minister Churchill, a staunch anti-communist, sought an alliance with the USSR due to the present existence of a more immediate threat in the region. This pragmatic and much more realistic description of applied professional ethics that is tied with dynamically coping in accordance with the present context will be further flushed out in the next section. For now, I want to introduce the second main theme here: and that is a theme I briefly introduced in the previous section, the "sequential" approach RespA had been trying to describe between the two schools:

"The guidance and the code of ethics that I have formulated for myself over the years; that should be, really the code of conduct in a consistent manner...to answer your earlier question about this or that: it is you start from the one to which you are more tolerant to achieve the one that is kind of a golden standard."

So now, we can safely assume that RespA sees the conventional, static professional codes of ethics as a "golden ideal": "theory" that takes from the best of practice as dictated by "the millions" on what is right and what is wrong. And one's daily ethical dealings and dynamic coping within the frame of the project is seen, by RespA, as the vehicle one should use to be in continuous pursuit of the former. But recall that, to RespA, the latter is not really reachable: it simply serves as a very important calibrator of compasses. This, I think, serves as a perfect quote to encapsulate all this:

"...let us agree that those ethics that were written by this school or that school and have been adopted; by doing that, we have agreed on what to achieve. But implicitly, we are all agreeing inside, that we cannot achieve it, but we have to approach it. So this is a non-written deal...The real ethics is how to achieve the what"

Notice RespA's mention of "real" ethics: these are the personally-derived, professionally applied ethics that he uses daily within his project and with his project team. In the next and final section, we will resolve the non-intervention dilemma and talk more about this pragmatist angle.

Q5 is meant to come to an understanding of the PM's lived experience when it comes to dealing with ethical dilemmas over the duration of their entire career – not just in their current projects. And here, I found RespA much more open in telling me specific situations that involved him. I will focus on one of these situations later as I think it serves as a perfect summary of everything discussed, but before that, I want to resolve the non-intervention problem from earlier.

To start, RespA provides me with an overview of the ethical dilemmas that he generally has to deal with in his projects: *"In my projects: you will see the contractor doing unethical things; the government rep; the consultant; even your colleagues in other departments being unethical. What can you do about it?"* – again we are seeing the contrast in ethics between different stakeholders, and also the non-interventionist attitude that RespA seemingly calls for. However, what came after clarified this issue once and for all: *"...What you can do is control the actions of yourself and the team that is directly under you [the project team] and ensure that it is up to your satisfaction, and here there can be no compromise 100%."* And so this energy-conserving, non-intervention policy that RespA had been describing is made much clearer here: Firstly, he sees the project team as an extension of himself, or at least, of what is directly under his control, which ultimately means that in his dealings with the other stakeholders, the project team to his mind is always a unified front – with him at its head. And secondly, as I find an opportunity to probe more on this angle of "responsibility", he describes how he deals with these unethical elements in the other stakeholders (that are outside his control): *"You fight defensively..."* giving me the parallel of the Muhammad Ali vs. George Foreman fight that took place during the twilight of the former's career in Zaire. He explained that Foreman was seven years younger, and so more energetic and explosive than his peer; but Ali, despite the onslaught and continuous punishment *"kept his head until the other side got tired and Ali found the opportunity and KO'd him in one simple punch."* This metaphor clarified that what is under one's control, to RespA's mind, includes the ability to fight back "defensively" when the need arises. RespA did tell me an example on this before the discussion took us this far. He had previously told me, in passing, that once when he was much younger, he was in a position where a certain number of people (that he was familiar with) were unfairly taking advantage of a certain system, and management had asked him to point out the ones who were "doing wrong". He told me that he refused to do this, and instead, elected to tell them the names of the ones who were definitely "in the clear" – while making no claims for or against the character of the others – leaving management with both the freedom and the burden of coming to a conclusion about them. I think this serves as an excellent example on "fighting defensively".

To end, I would like to analyze one particular ethical dilemma that occurred in RespA's long career in project management – but really it is not the event itself that is in focus here as it was mentioned briefly and in passing. It is the background to that event that I think is crucial to understand.

During the discussion of Q5, RespA reminisced for a while on his university days providing me with a detailed background of the prelude to his long and successful career in project management. He told me that, at the time, he was surrounded by "kids with rich parents" while he himself struggled with what little allowance his family could muster to send from back home *"...in eight years of living in [country name] I never had so much as an espresso...And now, this makes the character."* Fast forward to present day, he told me (quickly, as if it was nothing), that he was once offered a [seven-figure] bribe by a certain

powerful entity – although, the offering party did not call it a bribe exactly, but RespA understood what was happening. *“You know what I told him? I told him ‘If you came to me back during those times, maybe. But now, unfortunately for you, I know money is worth nothing’ – from the, from the suffering of those days, you see?”* The reason I wanted to end on this is because I think it wraps everything up beautifully. Here we see the extremely personal core of ethics that is the direct result of very personal experiences, and which emerges in the form of what RespA called “virtue; temperance etc.”, in the midst of a professional ethical dilemma. This was confirmed by RespA’s definition of “virtue” (he had used the word generously so I asked him to define it in Q6): he basically explained that it is something along the lines of one not mistaking the “ends” for the “means”: *“The biggest mistake people make is mistake the ends with the means...What in your opinion is money? Is it an end or a means? [Interviewer says ‘means.’] Exactly, that’s how it should be. Money is a tool, a means.”* RespA’s story is that ultimately, his integrity is his identity and the root of his “power” as a project manager. As he said *“...if I accepted [the bribe], then I would not be good value for his [the briber’s] money...I would be useless to him”* because RepA would have immediately lost this power, and very identity; which is what the briber was ostensibly after.

RespB-O15 and RespC-O15

The reason I am covering both RespB-O15 and RespC-O15’s stories together is because they work in projects for the same firm (though in very different capacities). And they both have the same years of experience working in projects; though again, they have had quite different journeys. And they both talk extensively about relationships with “enlightened” bosses.

RespC can be called a project manager or a project engineer in the most traditional sense. His expertise as well as current project responsibilities are mainly meant with the technical: construction projects, and megaprojects; civil engineering undertakings; management of workforce; execution etc. He reports directly to the CTO (Chief Technical Officer) of the firm. RespB on the other hand works with the project managers in supply-chain, financial, procurement and planning capacities: his formal job title is “Senior Supply-Chain Manager” but he works mostly, and most of the time exclusively, alongside the project managers to ensure that their projects have the best prices for work packages and contracts (which are signed with contractors, subcontractors and suppliers). He reports directly to the CFO (Chief Financial Officer) of the same firm.

When I inquired into their respective definitions of ethics, RespC replies with a question that represents a theme that will soon become widespread (especially in my interviews with the contractors) “Are we talking about project management?” – pointing toward a difference between personal and professional ethics. Before his actual answer *“To act as per the standards and in accordance with the contracts: to reach the purpose of the project, the target of the project.”* Take note of these recurring themes of ethics in a professional setting always being in service of an end relating to success within the project; and how project managers mostly see ethics as directly linked with their competence in finishing the job. RespB’s answer on the other hand, seemed more personal, and it pointed directly toward a shift in the immediate project environment: *“It was something as a second habit in my character, in my personality. After [FirmName1] took over [FirmName2], it’s becoming a way of life in work: Policy; what to do, what not to do...”* So already, from the first sentence, RespB is describing a unique situation (an environment transition) happening at this firm that is affecting his application of ethics. RespB then goes on to provide me with two of the most prevalent definitions of ethics that I saw in my interviews, unknowingly making my job easier *“Ethics: it can be interpreted as actions, policies, the way of doing things under a certain*

criteria or with a certain requirement. Or maybe it is the way the project should be done in order to get the maximum benefit.” And we shall soon see how RespB places these two in opposition to each other: how one represents freedom and the other, a bureaucratic nightmare. But before, let us contrast that with RespC’s elaboration “I am dealing with very sensitive issues regarding the cost. If there is no ethics, or the level of ethics is [not] very high in my position, I will fail to deliver. Especially when it comes to things like costs and money, if there are no ethics, no standards, nothing like that; in all honesty...*there is no project management...you will not reach the purpose: the goal you are aiming to achieve.*” And here we are getting inklings that when RespC says “standards”, he is mostly referring to contracts that govern his relationships with the contractors he deals with on a daily basis – this will be confirmed later on in the interview (and with quotes like “*To act as per the standards and in accordance with the contracts.*”) Secondly, notice the strong link between ethics in project management and the handling of money return here. And thirdly, the aforementioned link between being a competent project manager, getting the job done, and exhibiting good professional ethics is made abundantly clear here. RespB, not surprisingly given his position, also re-affirms this link with money “*And moreover. For me it [ethics] is about the Added Value for Money (VFM)*”: linking his ethics with his set of skills as the project’s supply-chain manager and financial controller. Lastly, when asked about the importance of ethics, RespB replied “*Ethics is 20/10. It is the core. In order for you to guarantee...you have transparent and fair actions onward to the external stakeholder, and for your own company*”: the importance rating did not surprise me given his very personal definition of ethics early on. RespC did not give a number but recall his “Without ethics, there is no project management” line for an idea. But there are two additional themes here from RespB: linking ethics with “acting” in a “transparent” and “fair” way, which will return in full force during my discussion with RespD and RespF. As well as the not surprising relational description of project management and ethical action – here toward external and internal stakeholders (abundant in all interviews). On this, also from RespB, “*Either for internal stakeholders or external stakeholders; and among the project team themselves...The behavior itself.*” So it is the way you behave or interact with your project team (we see a lot of this in the previous interview), but also crucially with other stakeholders both within and without the organization.

As for Q2, meant with discerning during which phases of the project most ethical dilemmas arise, both respondents gave nearly identical answers. They both acknowledged the importance of the pre-execution phases naming “the business case” and “planning” as two examples, but unequivocally asserted that the execution phase is the most important. A summary from RespC:

“In the execution, it is I think 80% of the project cycle...It has all the development and it reflects the *actual situation* of the project. In the planning, I have a lot of assumptions. In the business case and planning maybe we have assumptions. In the execution, we have the *real* or the *actual* development of the project happening in front of your eyes.”

RespB on the other hand talked about the tender process that happens during the planning phase, telling me that the tenders he deals with in his projects are quite substantial (usually in the millions of dollars). In his words however, “nevertheless the *execution* is the most important one, because during the execution is reflecting *having the right result* among all processes and moreover...you will have the final end result: what you are expecting from what you have done in planning” and “Therefore the execution is the most important part. And the ethics should be more there than the other processes”. This theme of acknowledging the importance of pre-execution deliberations, while insisting that applied ethics becomes most relevant, or more important during the execution phase – due to a shift between what is “on paper” to what is “real” or “actual” (when the PM starts “dealing”) is extremely common across interviews. But

RespB adds a crucial notion here “...*having less ethics in the business case would end up with a disaster in execution. It will roll over all of the phases. And the execution is the most crucial*”. And so to him, (and to RespA and to most others), “*ethics cannot be divided: meaning the ethics is the ethics...It should be in all*”. From this description (and similar ones from the previous, and upcoming interviews), we get this theme that ethics should be “indivisible”, and a lack of ethics in any phase has reverberating consequences across all phases; nevertheless, the execution phase is when one needs to stay most alert because it is where most of the “dealing” happens (between the project team; and outside with the line organization, and external stakeholders: contractors, suppliers...). While the pre-execution phases (like “planning” or “business case”) are seen as the origin/reference point to which everything that comes later is continuously compared, all with the aim of achieving the project goals. Recall how Kliem (2012) explains that due to the “temporary” and “high-pressure” nature of project work: there always exists potential for cutting of corners, quick fixes, and reductions in quality at the expense of the client. Also that even though the project may be short-term, many of the decisions can have long-term consequences. A simple change in scope will likely have a reverberating impact throughout the supply chain at one time or another, even if it goes under change control. Being the supply-chain manager, it is not surprising that RespB zeroed in on this important angle.

When it came to Q3, both respondents gave a very similar answer, but from wildly differing angles of approach. I will cover RespC’s answers first and then RespB’s.

RespC described a very important theme that we saw in the first interview, and will repeat in many interviews. He describes a kind of “reservoir” of personal ethics that arises, in his own words, “...*it arises from within, from how you were raised, from your experience: both your personal experiences that you lived through; and from your professional experience*” and this is why he concludes: “*I lean toward the second school*”. RespC even equates the first school, that “starts off from ends”, with religious or dogmatic thinking – “*During my practical experiences, I met a lot of ‘religious’ people but their level of ethics is not existent.*” While he on the other hand “I act according to the *applied situation* that is in front of me. I already have it, and I have always been like this all my life.” (A direct link to RespG’s reasoning can be highlighted here: “*I wouldn’t go...what would Jesus do? I think it’s embedded.*”)

This part about “I already have it” and ethics that arise from “within” in a specific “*applied situation*” will sound extremely familiar to those who read the Theory section, and will be elaborated upon in the Discussion when answering our Research Question. Probing further, I get more insights into RespC’s world, and here he elaborates more on the transition in environment that is happening around this project team (something that RespB hinted towards and will expound on). From what I gathered, their firm had recently been acquired by a multinational corporation that is a major global player in their field. RespC told me that with this multi-billion dollar acquisition, the new management had a “major push” where they “started circulating all these things about ethics and standards”. RespC then describes himself (and as we shall see in the next part, his boss and fellow project team) as not particularly moved by these initiatives. The reasoning for this is crucial to understand, Examine RespC’s words carefully:

“I see those things and I feel that I already have them, they are already with me. I don’t care much about the things [the firm is circulating] because I already have them. When they tell you don’t accept gifts, or invitations and stuff like that [presumably from third parties], I never did! I don’t want to toot my own horn so-to-speak but I already have those things inside me.”

"I look at them and see them as normal or 'default' things. Maybe other people saw them as 'Wow! These are new notions' or started getting entangled within them or started getting scared. But for me, no nothing has changed. Because these principles, I already have them, from the source."

"This is my nature. And these initiatives don't change anything in my behavior...So as I mentioned this is something internal and these initiatives did not affect me in the slightest."

During the final moments of my interview with RespA (from the first interview), right after the structured part, he had told me this: "In our organization, they give us these forms to evaluate people's ethics: good, bad, outstanding... I *refuse* to fill these out. There is not half a [expletive], you are either corrupt or you are not. You are either ethical or not, there is no such thing as 70% ethical."

So now we are seeing that these initiatives undertaken by these big firms toward enhancing the ethical standards of their project teams are, in the eyes of the PMs: at best, unnecessary; and at worst, cheesy and detached. The two PMs mentioned here (A and C, and as we will soon see, B) all think that their reservoir of ethics or virtue that was built through decades of personal and professional experiences does not require instruction from upper management to tell them what is ethical and what is not. The notion that you can "raise" the level of ethics through corporate training programs seems untenable. The idea that you can "evaluate" the level of ethics a person has with the use of a form is laughable to these PMs. These major themes and how they tie in with authors like Ljungblom and Lennerfors, Bredillet, Dreyfus and Coeckelbergh will be covered in Discussion. And here, it is worth mentioning that RespD-CO36 is trying to introduce a different approach to these ethics training initiatives and sees them in a much better light, so perhaps we can get a more complete picture from both sides of the spectrum. This quote that concluded my interview with RespB can be used to summarize "Ethics cannot be written; or cannot be studied, cannot be educated, cannot be forced. Ethics should be *embraced* and *built-in*...You gain this from when you are an infant until you die. *It cannot* be compromised."

Now on Q3, from RespB, we get a complete description of the corporate acquisition that shifted the environment around the project team. In short, RespB described to me three phases:

- Phase 1 was when he was working under the original firm (FirmName1 for our purposes) but under stale leadership. In his words "I was a person strictly following the standards and procedures and ethics code of conduct *strictly* without *any* thing out of the box, *strictly* dummy to *the book*. And I ended up with very delayed projects, the end result wasn't that great, and the financial impact on the tender, well, there was really no value for money, there was no added value."
- Then Phase 2 came around, which is presented as a "golden age", describes the period still under FirmName1 but with a new CFO in charge who was much more pragmatic, trusted his team, and delegated much authority to his subordinates, "But when [name redacted] became the CFO, we totally followed a different approach. Which was: I trust you – you have something...built-in, based on this trust. You have ethics [and] based on these ethics you *take control* and get me the best deal in the market regardless of the written rules – regardless of the...I mean *by the book*! Note that *I have ethics built-in*! This is why we have achieved big and numerous discounts and savings throughout all contracts for the last 2 years. Because of this approach."
- And then an unfortunate return to the status quo, after the acquisition: Phase 3, "And now after the acquisition of FirmName1, *No!* We should fulfill the letter of the book. We cannot go out *even even* if

you are not fulfilling the value for money...because eventually you are assessing and putting criteria *on-book*. The tender is *all paper document*, it doesn't know *exactly* what to expect. Even if you are covering all criteria and taking in your consideration of all things to make the tender and selected the best bidder; nevertheless, *it is all documents* and the documents cannot *show you* what exactly what the end result will be. It will only be documents, only on paper.”

By this stage RespB was visibly upset. I could feel the pain behind those words. Here is a project administrator, with ties to both the line and the project organizations and who clearly cares about achieving the best target for his firm: projects that are completed successfully and with the best VFM (value for money). From these quotes and others, I gathered that RespB feels he has been reduced to an automaton with no breathing space or leeway to act creatively. That with absolute and strict adherence to set regulations, his job could really be performed by anyone. His skills are not needed, and perhaps, he himself is not needed: “From a business perspective, *competence is you*...*If you are capable to do it in the right time* with a unique set of skills.” Recall how Coeckelbergh described the Platonic design approach, when we believe that we can solve everything with ethical codes and more regulation that are decreed by some moral super-agent, can lead to the reduction of the decision-making agent i.e. Dasein facing an ethical dilemma to a “moral machine” whose moral subjectivity, if they have any at all, is limited to making or following rules. RespB had found some breathing space with the arrival of a new and enlightened boss who possessed a creative touch for management and whom placed absolute trust in his team’s judgment and, accordingly, delegated much authority to his subordinates, resulting in a period when RespB and his team felt free to dynamically cope with their tasks and surrounding environment, achieving excellent results. But that did not last as, with the acquisition, strict enforcement of highly formulaic/generic codes and regulations stripped the team of any freedom they previously had. Also note how RespB ties his “competence” with his very “identity”; and describes his application of ethics as being in the service of successful completion of targets with “value for money” (in service of that competence). This will turn out to be a major theme in this paper.

Here, I would like to also present an overview of RespC’s relationship with his superior (the CTO of that same firm) because it contains many important lessons and themes: “The boss, the chief, has a big effect. He is a well-experienced man who studied and worked all over the world, and a man like this has a huge effect on the ethics within the team. When I first came to this company we didn't have all these codes or standards or stuff like that; but what really affects you is your boss, your manager. Your leader. Engineer [name redacted], I'm telling you, I have it inside me; but also, he affected me a lot, and also affected the rest of the team...The thing is not just about codes and standards; *it's the environment!*”

Recall how Kliem argued that project managers usually work in different environments and what may be permissible or acceptable in one environment may not be so in another (even within the same organization). And how things like management styles, corporate culture, and ways of doing business can vary wildly from one environment to another which can lead to “inadvertent ethical transgression” through misinterpretations or miscalculations. Not to mention clear and direct links with Coeckelbergh’s Moral Craftsmanship as emerging in a specific environment with specific people and tools. This will be elaborated upon in the Discussion. It seems that leadership, by being ethical and virtuous in its own right, and by placing its trust and confidence in the project team can do much more to instill ethics than any training regiment or form-filling. A further quote that focuses on the former point, and that links with what RespB had said about his chief:

“Engineer [name redacted] gives you the confidence to act. He would tell us to go and to act and to make mistakes and *he would take full responsibility*. I don't mean do something ethically wrong on purpose of course, I mean make a *judgment call*, a decision within your role and make a mistake and I will take the blame. And this really affects the team. When your manager gives you self-confidence, you can go and make decisions and negotiate with massive international contractors; and he [the manager] gave you this power...The manager tells you ‘go and make mistakes and I will take the fall’. Of course a human like this with great values and everyone knows about his good character, you will -- even if against your will, become a good person, and have similar thinking.”

I can immediately remind you of the similar discussion I had with RespA where he described the necessity of trusting the team, delegating important decisions, finding and implementing the best ideas, and above all, taking “all of the responsibility while claiming none of the credit” as part and parcel of the wise project manager’s job description. How he linked his own competence directly with the competence of his team, and how the two-way trust between him and the team was the vehicle by way of which they can perform their jobs well, leading to him performing his job well.

As for the last part (Q4 and Q5), and after my discussion with RespA who also worked for a large firm on the owner’s side, I was not surprised when neither RespB nor RespC shared details on current ethical dilemmas and events, for different reasons. However the former did give me descriptions of events that he had been seeing. While the latter told me that he is not sharing anything current not because of any NDA (non-disclosure agreement) or anything of the sort; but because he honestly could not “recall” any such events. He told me that he simply “works right” and so “has nothing to fear” – he does not really stop to think about such details. Recall how Dreyfus argued that “reflection” (tied with theoretical knowledge about “virtuous” practice) can actually “get in the way” of “virtue-as-skilled-engagement” or “virtue-as-performance”. How Coeckelbergh theorized that such reflection itself can constitute an existential disruption: that when we do in fact consciously deliberate on some ethical dilemma or moral issue, we do so in moments of reflection that are outside our everyday flow so-to-speak. And ultimately, how morality as such is very rarely a matter of detached reasoning, but more of a “moral development-in-action”. A “skill” – “virtue” that is dynamically being developed as the moral agent gains experience. RespE also makes a similar note when describing the execution phase but he, conversely, did not mind sharing many stories from his work. RespC here is also re-introducing the theme of ethics as a way of conserving energy, that when you are being ethical, you have nothing to fear “*You will do your job; your message, you have nothing to fear because you have done nothing wrong. You have full transparency. So there is nothing clouding your judgment. You are walking straight.*” And so basically does his work without much to really consider or worry about: “...it gives you power.” (This was identical to what RespA had said). RespC did tell me however, and in detail, about the most major ethical event that happened during his career and how he dealt with it and how it affected him, and I will cover that at the end. Now, I want to quickly look at RespB’s general descriptions of current events:

RespB basically described a state of affairs that he is seeing a lot of at the moment, and that is “*Negligence* is the *key word*. And I am not talking about mistakes, I am talking about *negligence*.” From what I gathered, RespB looks around him and sees people who are being ethical in the “by-the-book” definition; and yet demonstrate a high level of carelessness (I assume about company resources): “...having carelessness in their daily activities. That either you *lose* money, or are having an end result that maybe *you do not need!* Or maybe it could have been done in a good way; or maybe you don't need at all!” And crucially “If they have ethics *within* they would be *more caring*.”

From the discussion that followed, I came to understand that one can religiously follow corporate ethical and operational guidelines and regulations, and so would be strictly-speaking, ethical – as defined by the corporate rulebook: and yet while also being extremely wasteful of company resources by recklessly engaging with, or seeking wasteful endeavors (what he termed “negligence”). RespB sadly relates a highly pessimistic outlook here with quotes like “Virtue it's a...you are ‘doing’ virtue. It's correct action. Nevertheless, when you are doing virtue, eventually you will be sacrificed. [Interviewer comments: ‘Why sacrificed?’] Because currently, vice is the norm, and *virtue is the bizarre*.” And “*You can see that currently in [country name]. It's everywhere!*” Also note that despite never reading anything by Aristotle, RespB provided me with a clearly Aristotlean definition of virtue: it was totally instinctual for him that virtue is action that is good and that is applied. You will find this theme in every single interview. Moreover, RespB seems to equate “ethics that spring from within” or the “*real* ethics” (also described by RespA, RespC and almost every other respondent) as tantamount to actually “caring” about one’s work; not just doing it as a mere job. We will see how all of this ties with theory in the Discussion.

Finally to RespC’s story, which is a highly personal tale that he experienced at his first job after graduating, and which incited much emotion in the PM as he was telling it. I try to capture the essence of the story as it was told here, and then end with my remarks:

“I was in charge of a project in [redacted], and I was in charge of the bar-building which is something for the steel structure. So I was making orders for the steel we require in the project and we had a whole thing where we were receiving shipments of steel -- and this was a huge project by the way, we had massive amounts of steel, in the millions -- so within the orders, while I was checking for what we received, I was shocked to find a 60-ton order on the list that I could not find in the site. So I was looking and looking and looking and I discovered that this order was never offloaded. So I notified the owners of the project and they had a discussion with the supplier who was insisting that it was offloaded. And then he [the supplier] came and had a meeting with the owner and showed him a signed order of receipt -- which was signed by the owner himself. Apparently the supplier had visited the owner earlier and told him that ‘oh I have this shipment and the guys forgot to sign it, can you sign it for me very quickly?’ And so we kept looking and the supplier kept defending himself, and he personally came to me and started telling me ‘I'm not a thief’ blah blah blah. I simply replied ‘I am not saying you are a thief, just show me this order of steel with these diameters and lengths etc., just where is it?’ And he kept fighting me, and I was young at that time you know, and he started telling me ‘You are just a kid, and you are casting doubts on my integrity?’ Stuff like that. So, it became apparent that he was in fact dealing [under the table] with the drivers and this shipment of steel was sold outside [but marked as received within the project]. And he, the following day, came and gave us the amount of steel and told us that the drivers had, ‘without his knowledge’, went and sold it on the market. Of course it became very clear that he was a thief. And after that, he came to me a while after, during the holidays, and he called me on the side, and he was travelling to [country name removed], and told me to give him the list of orders for steel because he was leaving soon. He called me on the side and he took out a big wad of cash. I asked ‘What is this?’ and he said ‘Consider it a gift for the holidays’, ‘I consider you a younger brother’ and stuff like that. And this was my first time ever dealing with something like this, I was scared and I said ‘No’ and my face was obviously pale, the shock was obvious on my face. And I left. And just by chance, the son of the firm owner was sitting in my office at that time, and

he asked me ‘What's wrong?’ I said ‘Nothing.’ But it was very obvious on my face that something was wrong, and so he insisted ‘What's wrong? Something happened.’ And so I told him everything. So he [the son of the firm owner] immediately notified the owner, and he [the firm owner] immediately cast out the supplier from the list of suppliers for the project, and he [the supplier] was barred from ever being a supplier. And this was my first time ever dealing with anything like this. I mean it was a massive amount of cash.”

A few things here:

- This is the only instance where I will type out the entire script of the story as it was told. Here I wanted to elucidate the very personal and real feelings that grips PMs in the moment something like this happens, evident in quotes like *“I was scared and I said ‘No’ and my face was obviously pale...”* I twice received full permission to include this story in its entirety because RespC wanted to raise awareness to ethical situations that upcoming and young PMs (as he was at the time) might face. Further, I will use this story as a reference point for future stories about bribery.
- If you recall from earlier, RespC had insisted that the corporate ethical training programs that were being pushed at his current firm were met with a lukewarm response from his team, insisting that when they “instruct” not to “accept gifts [from third parties]” and such, he already “has these things within” him: they are from his nature; innate and “default”. And so it logically followed that I wanted to ask him whether he received any instruction at his first job, or maybe at the university where he studied. But before I could even probe into this angle, he continued and said this *“He thought everyone has a price. And here we go back to the topic of principles, and here you know, I was fresh out of university, and they [the university] and the company didn't give us lists or codes of ethics or anything like that. For me it just came from within me, from my upbringing, from my..[long pause]..you see I acted from something that is within me, there was nothing like a standard that prevented me, you know what I mean?”* Giving me my answer without having to ask. This led me to conclude that RespC definitely prefers the second school of thought over the first: seeing ethical action as springing within a specific context and from a very personal place within; saying that he met many religious folk in this field who had non-existent ethics, thereby not giving any credence to instruction (both religious and corporate). His peer, RespB, had similar thoughts. Recall quotes like *“Ethics cannot be written; or cannot be studied, cannot be educated, cannot be forced. Ethics should be embraced and built-in. When you are raised by your parents...”*, as well as his mention of people who technically follow the letter of the law while being negligent and wasteful of company resources. However, the latter ultimately did lend some credence to having some sort of instruction or code – but with the main burden of ethical action falling onto the “personal core”. In RespB’s own words: *“...maybe 70% for the second one and 30% for the above and this is my understanding and my perspective.”*
- During the first interview, in his description of happenings during the execution phase, RespA explicitly voiced an innate mistrust of contractors *“I have nothing against contractors but I have a saying: the best contractor has killed his mother for a buck.”* RespA had said this half-jokingly, but from RespA’s description as well as RespC’s current and past dealings with contractors, and as we shall soon see, RespD’s as well, we start to get an initial picture of how owners generally view and deal with contractors in the project environment. But then during Interviews 5 and 6, we will view this dynamic from the other side when talking with contractor PMs, while covering what RespA and RespC said during my second meetings with them, in an attempt to get the full picture.

- And finally, this theme of attempted bribery person-to-person will repeat one more time (with one other being corporate-to-corporate): but note from this story, and also from RespA's depiction, that the offering party seems to always present the bribe as some kind of friendly harmless personal gesture; but both RespA in the first interview, and RespC immediately and instinctively caught on: from RespC *"It was obvious that he was trying to bribe me so that I would stay quiet the next time."*

RespD-CO36

RespD-CO36's insight into ethics within project management is quite unique. This is because, for the past 20 years, he has been working within upper management of both a project organization on the contractor's side, and currently, the line organization of a firm that is heavily dependent on projects i.e. a matrix arrangement, on the owner's side. In all, he has over 36 years of experience in finance, management theory and corporate strategy. And while he does not work exclusively with projects, he sits in at all the big meetings and dictates the project organization's agendas, resources and deadlines; and so hopefully from him, we can get insights from the upper echelons of the line organization.

When asked for a definition of ethics, I was greeted with quotes like "Do the best conduct"; "Be fair. Be trustworthy". So to be ethical is to act in the best manner at hand, while being "fair" and "trustworthy"; but this, to RespD, is much deeper and much more pragmatic than it may seem at first. Right after this quote, RespD elaborated that his firm, as well as many others are "increasingly investing in training their employees for ethics, for a lot of reasons." When I inquired on the main reason:

"...they have to maintain a standard of being trustworthy -- being trusted by their stakeholders, by their investors, by their shareholders, by their clients, by their employees, by the governmental authorities; by the environment around them. Companies are investing in this because they know that it is becoming very useful to...have a common culture of being trustworthy; doing business in the right way. Because this is...affecting their bottom line -- I mean when you are trusted in the business: you will have the trust of your investors, of your bankers, of your clients. So you will benefit."

This major theme is especially prevalent during my upcoming interviews with the contractors. So a good standard of professional ethics, to RespD, can be instigated by corporate ethics training programs, and leads to a corporate environment or culture that can be seen both internally, and by external stakeholders as worthy of the label "trustworthy", thereby practically being good for the bottom line. RespD elaborates much more on this in later parts. A last quote to end Q1 *"...Because business depends on integrity and trust."* Recall from RespC's answers, "Without ethics, there is no project management": Here a tenuous link can be highlighted because even though both respondents work in separate environments and so could be argued to have meant different things, RespC was specifically talking about his dealings with contractors in a transactional sense at the time. So we can safely assume at least that, when it comes to business transactions that take place between different actors in the project environment, ethics (here represented in integrity and trust) are integral for the ultimate success of the project.

Moving into Q2, RespD provides me with his angle of approach when it comes to application of ethics in project management: "Project management deals with *a lot of stakeholders*. You start the project with *due diligence* related to the feasibility studies, to having your consultants: architectural, structural etc. Then dealing with main contractors; or if you have a lot of packages, you will be dealing with a lot of subcontractors also within the project. Project management is like a complete world."

And to RespD, this whole world comes together specifically during the execution phase: “[Talking about phase(s) with the highest instances of ethical dilemmas,] it is the execution of course. Because I told you, you *deal* with the *whole world*. The Russian proverb said: If you go to the market and buy something, the whole world knows because to buy this product: there is a producer, there is a designer, there is an inventor, there is a distributor, there is an agent, there is blah blah. So when you go to *execution* you *deal* with all. So maybe it is like the sum game.” A few things:

- Not surprisingly, we see RespD like previous and future respondents describe project management in a highly relational sense across internal and external stakeholders: but perhaps unique to RespD (and also perhaps to RespA in his second-meeting elaborations on the owner vs. contractor dilemma) is this description of projects as a “complete world” and a “sum game”, clearly hinting that things like requests for tenders by the owners are acted upon by the contractors; good execution by the project team involves good execution by their contracting counterparts etc. From RespA “*It takes two to tango*”. It is almost as if the entire project is a closed system: clockwork where every part depends on another to do its function. And also not surprisingly, he describes the execution phase, like all the previous respondents, as the phase when the project team starts “dealing” with this “world”.
- RespD and RespA, perhaps due to their particularly long years of experience, both present a certain dependency and gratitude from the project organization toward the external stakeholders. RespD particularly mentions his firm’s relationships with “customs authorities” and “clearing agents” as of particular importance because their operations and projects are multinational and so involve a lot of imported items; and the “lead time” for the arrival of these items is particularly of high importance to his firm’s operations and projects. He also mentions “local vendors” – especially when it comes to steel; cement and other construction material as these are often impractical to import and one needs to find “proactive suppliers” who can get the shipments “on spec and on time”. And so, to that end, one needs to have a “solid network” based on “trust” established and maintained in the “local markets”. This particular nuance is somewhat lacking in their younger or less experienced counterparts.
- Despite averring that the execution phase is when most ethical dilemmas start arising (due to this actual “dealing with the world” element), and so one must most be on their guard so-to-speak, pre-execution activities that are unique to this respondent coming from an upper management viewpoint such as performing “due diligence” during “feasibility studies” are uniquely presented here and they were not mentioned by any other respondent. We will see just how important and effective due diligence is to this respondent’s ethical framework in an upcoming part (Q4).
- And finally here, the much prevalent theme of ethics as “indivisible” returns in full effect with this respondent as well “...but you cannot divide and say I need it here more than here.”

As for Q3, and as expected given his senior outlook and position, RespD provides me with a few highly unique angles. Firstly, the angle of exactly how the manager’s ethics progress with his/her “professional journey” which adds a lot of nuance to the story of professional ethics in the modern project environment. RespD told me that, for the most part, most professionals starting out early in their careers do not see much action in the applied ethics department. That is not to say that their work is meaningless, rather it is “functional” but not in a decision-making capacity: “*When I was a junior I was working very hard, until 11 at night preparing the daily recap to put on the desk of the deputy GM. It was like functional.. I mean I was like a cog in a bigger machine, I am not a decision maker.*” RespD continues by saying that everyone in the professional environments he worked possessed a “reservoir of ethics”, as well as some level of

“ethical awareness”: “I had a reservoir of ethics that I learned from my home and from my temple and from my university and from my society. This reservoir is there, ok?” But RespD argues that this “reservoir” and whatever “ethical awareness” you possess are somewhat dormant in these early stages of your career. It is only at later stages, when you have actually become a decision-maker, with decisions that can directly affect people’s lives and livelihoods that this “reservoir of ethics” – previously dormant or theoretical – becomes “applied” and “crucial”:

“What I am trying to make clear: your awareness when you are in a lower position – the reservoir of ethics is there; but it is not expected of you to make important decisions, it is there within you but when do you need to.. I mean it's like you have a diamond right? But when do you need to take it out and polish it and show it to people? When for example you become more senior, more of a decision maker... It is precisely linked with when you are in a position that you can affect others' lives. Then ethics becomes *crucial*. Why? Because now your decisions, they *affect a human*; his life, his psychology, his home, his income, *you have to be very careful*. Ethics here; not just awareness, now you are a decision-maker. To destroy someone's livelihood, to conspire against them or to lie to him; or if he is a contractor or an owner or a consultant etc., now your decision becomes *destructive*, now you are controlling the destinies of humans. Here ethics becomes *applied ethics* – ethics in action.”

And as my talks with RespD continued, I started to realize that the aforementioned “reservoir of ethics” that came from very personal sources along the professional’s journey does not “evolve”; rather, in his words “but you start having more awareness towards it. It becomes more important -- in the position that you are in... I mean, it is *required by the nature* of your senior position in the career ladder. It becomes more *required* of you to *live* ethics.” This theme of a junior vs. senior PM having differing levels of emphasis and consideration for ethics seemed commonsensical, but was only really highlighted by this respondent. During my third meeting with him, he hinted that it is perhaps due to his particularly “long and diverse” experience in many industries, and through switching sides “from owner to contractor to owner...” why he was able to give me this insight. Since this paper studies experienced project managers, it is mostly assumed that they have a certain degree of direct responsibility over other humans’ lives and livelihoods, which could explain the overwhelmingly high level of awareness regarding these topics demonstrated by all respondents, arguably confirming RespD’s emphasis. If this is so, we can assume a direct link between an increase in power, and by extension, responsibility; which leads to an increase in the necessity of applying ethics – or perhaps more accurately, for your “reservoir of ethics” to become “applied”. Notice his use of “*live* ethics” – that was not accidental. Recall how Dreyfus and Coeckelbergh argued that when we are novices at a certain skill or a trade or a craft, we need rules. But as we move up the stages of skill development, we start relying on “concrete experience” rather than “abstract principle”. And how Coeckelbergh’s moral craftsman is forged in “real world” problems. His know-how; creativity; imagination; learning... is “social” but above all “pragmatic”. And that before he/she can reach such heights, our moral craftsman must not only do a job, but rather do it with great skill that he/she has attained through training and experience. Experience that generates tacit knowledge. Our moral craftsman “knows how”, not “knows that”. RespD, like many others, wants a potential marriage between the two worlds (the Platonic and the Aristotelian) “*You are always.. the human always works with both approaches in his application of ethics.*” (And please also notice his repeated use of the word “human”). Quite uniquely, he actually provides me with real-life examples of how we can conceptualize and accomplish this:

First he told me a story that happened at a former position. He was working as a manager at a widely-known multi-national firm, stationed in an unnamed country in Africa, in a position that was initially meant to be temporary (but ended up lasting for more than a decade). One day he received reports of a “thief” who was “raiding the supply area”, and the staff that reported the incident presented it as a simple and shut case where codes and regulations clearly calls for the immediate firing of the offender with no compensation. RespD, instead, negating the “simple” nature that the accusers proffered asked for the accused to be brought to the office for a one-on-one meeting, and for all his employment records and details to be presented; and that no mention of the incident be allowed until a final decision has been made by him (RespD). After reviewing the person’s files, RespD was “mortified” to find that he had more than 20 years of experience at that company; and that he was an elderly man, married with a few children. What is more, when he had time to hear from the accused, he discovered that this had all been over a few apples. The employee told him that he had fallen on hard times and that he literally could not afford apples for his family and thought that nobody would notice a few missing apples, and that he would never ever do anything like that again. He told RespD that he would understand if he fired him; but asked him “Do you honestly believe that the people who brought me here are clean? Do you think that I am the only dark spot on an otherwise spotless white robe?” And though this event took place over two decades ago, I got the feeling that it never quite left RespD’s being. He paused for a while and then said this “That is what I am trying to reach to you: Ethics have to be a *blanket* covering *all*.” And from my third meeting with him “It was obvious that they were picking on him because he was weak. I knew I had a lot of work ahead of me in this position from that point...”

Despite the firm’s code of conduct containing a zero-tolerance policy toward theft, he had the elderly gentleman make him a personal promise not to steal from the firm again, and sent him on his way. He just could not conceive denying a person so close to retirement his pension for a few apples. And I presented this story as a bridge toward a more recent theme in RespD’s career, because I believe the marriage he is trying to propose between the two schools can also be seen in what he is doing now. RespD currently works for another multinational firm and he is leading one of those pushes for ethical training programs which we heard about from previous respondents. If you recall, they saw those training protocols as cheesy, disconnected and unnecessary (because most of them felt that they already “had it [ethics] within them”). However, the corporate training RespD is calling for is different:

“I told you, when I was discussing the first question and why the organizations are training their employees for the values and ethics, because they want their employees to *live* these ethics. *Not to act* to be *within the procedure*. *No!* They want their employees to reach a stage that they do not tick a box that I am having in my contract: anti-bribery or anti-slavery or women’s rights or children’s rights. *No!* They have to *live* this within their way of doing business. *If* they reach that stage, I believe that the organization has succeeded in making *ethics in real life*. *If* they can convince their employees, or train them to have the values and ethics as part of *their personal behavior*; *not* a declaration to be signed at the end of the year; not a box to be ticked in my contract or whatever...So it is like I mean having.. being.. *living* the ethics.”

It is obvious that the ethics training programs RespD is calling for want to do the opposite of the ones we heard about before. They do not want their employees simply “acting” or “ticking a box” or “evaluating” just to be in compliance as previously discussed. They want their employees to “*live*” in an ethical manner: to embody the virtues and principles without having to simply out of fear of punishment, or a mere desire to be in compliance. Recall an earlier quote “...*ethics that I learned from my home and from*

my temple and from my university and from my society etc.” It is possible that RespD is adding “the firm” as one of the sources that contributes positively to the reservoir of personal ethics that is applied daily in professional scenarios. In fact he confirmed this idea during my third interview with him.

Ultimately, I believe that RespD having seen much success during his career does have a certain respect for good company policies of ethical conduct, but “on top of that” (the base plus leeway wording was used by RespE as well), due to the very “human” nature of the considerations that the decision-maker is continually faced with, refuses to cede applied ethics to just these. Proposing the “middle ground” of changing the corporate policies, procedures and training programs themselves to become more pragmatic, realistic and human in their approach, therefore potentially nullifying the duality at his workplace. Note that it is still a Platonic, top-down approach with a design mentality (as theorized by Coeckelbergh); but with the end-goal of instilling ethics within the organization from the “bottom up”, and in a “*lived*” real way. Recall how Bredillet argues that ethical theory does not offer a decision procedure as ethics cannot be reduced to a system of rules; and yet that some rules remain unfringeable. Basically, ethical theory can illuminate the nature of virtue; but what the virtuous agent must do in a particular occasion depends entirely on the context and surrounding circumstances in the moment. And in order to fully acquire Phronesis (practical wisdom), one must become both ethically virtuous and practically wise through the development of virtue (through actions; experience; habits). So ethical virtue can only be said to be fully developed when integrated with Phronesis.

During my third meeting with RespD, he explained to me that he “understands” that professional codes of ethics and conduct are “long..., too detailed and too complex”. And he insisted that “the decision-maker must practice his own wisdom *within* these rules...he has to have a contingency plan within the context he is in...” In the last section, we will explore in more detail how RespD is pushing for training programs that aim to instill a sense of ethics “within” the employees of the “*lived*” kind: so that they do not simply “tick a box” or “follow the rules” because they are “afraid of punishment”; but because they “actually want to” act in an ethical manner. To summarize this part:

“I see the code of anti-corruption and anti-fraud...I want to make it applicable. I want to make it friendly. I want people to become.. to *walk* the talk. We can train them to have this behavior and not act out of fear or desire to comply. We do this through *awareness*, *training*, continuous follow-up and *feedback*. And the human touch is very important because everyone is different, do not expect too much.”

He provided me with a great parallel that explains his viewpoint toward the “first school” and “second school”: that the judges in the United States have great deference toward the Constitution, the Bill of Rights etc. “But...can they make their decision without seeing the defendant? Just based on what is written, on paper?” He is basically describing how judges in the US are famous for needing to have consummate knowledge of the law, while also needing to practice Phronesis based on the multi-faceted and often-times complex context and surroundings of the case and the defendant.

The story that RespD told me during Q4 and Q5 re-enforces a few widely seen themes while introducing a few new ones in its own right. Here a story of attempted bribery is told once again; but this time it is on a more systematic “corporate-to-corporate” level, rather than person-to-person. As mentioned earlier, RespD’s is a multinational firm operating in multiple countries on several continents around the world. In one of those countries, it was reported to RespD that one of their major contractors had been making underhanded payments to the local customs authority in order to make their job importing materials go

more swiftly. RespD was initially disturbed by this news, but what added insult to injury was that the contractor made contact with him personally and tried to sell him on the idea, saying that it was a “win-win situation” for everyone, and even requested that RespD streamline these payments. RespD, initially disturbed, became outraged – when asked whether he was upset because of a breach in corporate protocol as per standards; or on a personal level “It is a mixture, it is both. *I will never* allow it.” RespD immediately sprung into action and hired a local consultant who is an expert in these matters and, “...we did our due diligence to put things in the right place. We started a formal closure and we did not pay a single penny and we will not pay, because this is *not* our conduct or our ethics system.” Ultimately, this led to breaking ties with the contractor, the removal of the contractor from the list of suppliers from all projects, and from what I understood, investigations and arrests by local authorities.

RespD took a break in the middle of telling this story and expounded in detail on what he feels is at the root of lack of ethics within the “community of contractors”:

“Before continuing something came to my mind...it is a very major point from my humble experience, when dealing with the contractors: Unfortunately, the contracting companies *do not* abide by any ethical codes or any ethical values – despite being big tycoons in the business. Unfortunately, they don't [expletive] they don't train their employees; and what is more worrisome for me is that it is *the opposite*: they train their employees to *rob* their clients and to rob the stakeholders they are dealing with. Maybe you will not find a lot of people discussing this with you, but this is real life. That these contracting companies *train* their employees to be, you can call them swindlers, thieves whatever.. corrupted, racketeers. *And* when they train them to rob their client and the stakeholders and the government agencies and to bribe the people, you know what will happen in the end? Their own employees will turn around when the resources are becoming scarce and they will start stealing *their own company*; and in one day -- in 24 hours -- you will hear that the biggest contracting company XandY vanished, it is no more there. This is the main reason. This is what no one talks about. This is.. I know companies, I don't want to mention names because this is related to *my* ethics, but I can give you now 3 or 4 companies – major companies who were having contracts in the *billions* – and in one day they vanished, they are no more there. You know why? Because they were training their employees to rob their clients, and when the resources became scarce they came back and stole their own company, and these companies collapsed.”

He basically told me that, if you were to ask these multi-billion dollar contracting companies “What went wrong?” They would tell you “Liquidity problems”. But they would never tell you what actually caused the liquidity problems, “the lack of ethics”, how instructing their employees to “rob the clients” was a “bubble” all along. And how as soon as the resources started to become scarce, their employees simply turned around and started “robbing their own company.” This detour fascinated me, especially since RespD had maintained a level of appreciation and even gratitude toward the contractors and the suppliers in his projects. After the structured part of the interview, we talked extensively on this, and RespD provided me with an explanation. Basically he places the values he mentioned throughout the interview “trustworthiness”; “fairness” and “integrity” as being the way (or as he calls it “the process” – so it is dynamic) of not only “doing the right thing”, but even the “long-term thinker” (again recall how a good ethical standard, to RespD, is not only what is right, but what is also good for business). While the firms (such as the contractors he is talking about above) who not only disregard these values; but “train their employees” in the opposite direction are, in his own words: “*They are short term: whatever water you put*

in the desert soil, it will not hold, it will vanish. Because it is like waste, it is short-term thinking. This is how I summarize it.” RespG also zeroes in on this angle; and RespC, during my second meeting with him, mentioned this same short-term vs. long-term behavior. But RespC did not assign either exclusively to owners or contractors: it was just that, in his experience, “90% of contractors” seem to employ short-term thinking – making the rare ethical contractors more of a “joy” to find and deal with.

In this last section, I want to summarize what RespD is trying to teach us about ethics in the firm:

“[Talking about Awareness]...is that you have to *really* train, coach, invest in your employees. Because you want them to have integrity and trustworthiness for the benefit of them, and for the benefit of *your business*. So you will benefit from that. The bottom line will benefit. So this is the long-term thinking.” All while having “*Clear* procedures in place. Clear ethics systems in place. Clear question and answer. With a *feedback* system...So that they [the employees] *want* to say no [to a bribe]; not scared of punishment or just looking for an excuse.”

And so it seems that the reason RespD is so invested in this idea of “investing in” and training his employees to be more ethical is to increase their awareness toward ethical responsibilities in their daily lives: to instill a sense of “integrity” and “trustworthiness” within them which is of a highly-personal and “*lived*” kind – not just “a box to tick” (evident in his desire to “simplify the codes of ethics”; and his emphasis on “*wisdom* within” corporate procedure; and on “*feedback*; the human touch” between managers and subordinates being all-important). All while having “transparent and clear procedures...toward all your stakeholders inside and outside” leading to benefits for the firm itself in the “long-term” as it becomes worthy of the title “trust-worthy” by both internal actors and external stakeholders, leading to direct benefits to the bottom-line.

RespD did in fact give me an overview of these ethics training protocols that are being practiced by his firm. Basically, twice a year, an “ethics specialist” of some kind flies out from the mother company’s HQ and meets with RespD and his team. Firstly, some lectures are given by RespD and the specialist on the latest news and updates in the field of ethics; international laws on corruption; the importance of ethics; proper relationships with contractors etc. And then, a “cross-table discussion” takes place where every participant tells stories about situations concerning “ethical situations they had with stakeholders”, and attendance is mandatory for all managers, foremen and directors. Secondarily, an annual survey is distributed by RespD to all of his subordinates which is completely anonymous. In this survey, “practical day-to-day ethical situations” are explored. An example RespD provided me: let us say you are under pressure and a certain party asks for a certain payment to make things a lot easier. If a respondent answers with anything other than “No”: for example “I will give the least amount of money to get the problem solved” then it can be discerned that their “awareness is lacking”. Again, the surveys are completely anonymous and the goal “is not to punish but to raise awareness”. The data aggregated from all offices, departments and projects is sent back to HQ where specific departments with a particularly “low awareness score” become targeted for more intense ethical training initiatives in the future. It is evident that the “*feedback*” from/to upper management and “the human touch” that RespD previously mentioned are of the utmost importance, as their ultimate goal is to have their employees “*live*” in an ethical manner out of a true desire to do so; and not out of fear or to simply be in compliance. As the latter is seen as a “bubble” that will burst sooner or later, while the former, as previously discussed, is seen as the way of “the long-term” thinkers in the business.

RespE-C7 and RespF-C6

RespE-C7 and RespF-C6 are both engineers who started their careers working in projects with contractors, mainly in execution but also in design. They now both work as project managers still within contractor environments, but in different fields. RespE works in solar panel projects and mega-projects across the Middle East; and RespF works in construction in the United States.

When presented with Q1, both of them seemed to start off from the same point “Ethics of work you mean?” from RespF and “*Ethics at work? Or at like life in general?*” From RespE; in contrast to the respondents from the owner side who seemed to always describe ethics in an extremely personal sense (with the exception of RespC). With RespE, we will find a fascinating theme of a definite and conscious split between “personal ethics” and “professional ethics”. But let us look at RespF’s elaboration:

“To be honest with people. To be transparent. To be professional. To meet your deadlines -- committed I mean, with the.. I mean in my work for example, we have clients, when we tell them that a task will be done by a certain date, to abide by it. When we tell them this thing will cost you this much or something, to be honest with them; not to manipulate them, you understand what I mean? That's what I mean by ethics at work.”

Not only are we getting hints of a similar definition to that of RespD’s from the previous interview whom embodied ethics in “trustworthiness”; “transparency” and “integrity”, but with RespF we also get that same theme of all this being “good for business”:

“...but do you know how we get projects? They [the clients] ask about us, about our company, about what projects we accomplished; how did we treat our client in the previous projects? How did the building end up? So all of this.. I mean you get a good reputation so.. all of this comes from ethics...The ethics of this company are great and their dealings with their.. I mean they are very clear when dealing with their clients.”

And so it seems that being completely “honest” and “transparent” with your clients and not taking advantage of them, by virtue of the long experience you have in your field (in RespF’s case: construction), those clients will keep coming back, and others will too. Two examples from RespF’s current projects to drive this home:

“For example this client, she asks us about a certain specification and I will tell her: well this is really very expensive, I advise against it. Or like, we have tried this in a previous project and we advise against it; like, you are cutting through the [expletive] and giving it to them like it really is. Like a lot of them do not have experience with construction like we do. For example, my manager has more than 20 years of experience and he has seen many projects, so it is like this: Ethics is to help the client in the process of achieving a result which is perfect for them.”

“Like in our previous project, we had a client who had no problem paying as much as it takes. And he made many many P.O [package order] changes to the project. He kept changing the scope. During the project he really gave us hell, like even during this project that I am in now I am still working on that project because he keeps asking for changes. So, yeah, you have to be very clear: *pricing* is the most important stage. You see? Because we

were *honest* with him; because we gave him the product that he wanted, he kept giving us business, he did not want us to leave the project, he kept adding new things, and of course we are happy because we are getting revenue.”

And so as you can see, it is not just a matter of being transparent and honest and open etc., but you also have to deliver on time and with quality for the client to reciprocate and give you lasting business. The “Ethics as tied with competence” theme shows up in full force with these two respondents. Before we continue to Q2, I want to now return to RespE because there are three unique themes there. Consider his words carefully:

“Ethics...if I am linking it to project management and with my career is different to an extent from the ethics that I use in my daily life. Meaning, a person at work, and in project management specifically, makes decisions that.. [pause] maybe he is not happy with. But, for the benefit of the project, for the benefit of the work, for the benefit of his team. But in my personal life, these ethics [that are utilized during work] I could never use.”

During Q4 and Q5, this respondent was completely open: telling me many stories on ethical dilemmas he faced during his career. But what is utterly unique about this respondent is that he was the only one who told me stories where he was (or perceived himself to be) “the bad guy”, with a high degree of remorse. This coupled with the above quote (pointing to a complete separation between personal and professional ethics) can certainly lend credence to the argument that ethics within project management from the owner’s side is not the same as ethics within project management on the contractor side. Recall a quote from the first interview with RespA: “...*you have to ask yourself: Are you working for yourself? Are you working for a government? A big company? Directly with the owner? With your own money? It depends on where you are.*”

RespA during my second meeting with him elaborated on this significantly. Having revealed to me that he himself had worked on the contractor’s side for over 11 years and so he “understands their pain”. He explained to me that it is easy for owners to sit “high and mighty” and to “judge” the contractors, but that “It is not as simple as that: you see, it is the owners who often drive the contractor toward this behavior.” Elaborating that it is actually the owners who “control the market” and “...so when there is a bribe or something: it takes two to tango. You understand what I mean?” Continuing from RespA:

“When you are a contractor it is like you are coming in blind, you come into a project and it is like 7 or 8 years: you don’t know if you will make a profit; you don’t know if you will break even. You don’t even know if you will go bankrupt...The margins are *so tight* and the risk the uncertainty is *so high* when you are a contractor...*Everyone* is pressuring you: the consultant, the owner.. change this change this, this failed quality...”

And so, in RespA’s wise judgment “You have to work *with* him *not* against him. Understand that he is here to work *for me* – but I have to be awake: to quality and quantity...” presenting the same current policy and gratitude presented by RespD. But RespD was definitely less sympathetic on the whole, giving alternative reasons for the ethical failings of contractors (see previous interview). RespC, during my second meeting with him, also provided much more elaboration on his dealings with contractors: also telling me that he understands the immense “pressures” that they face, and that there exist contractors who “*are a joy to work with. They are the minority – like 10%...but finding and working with them is a joy*”. He, in line with what RespA said, told me that contractors often find themselves under scrutiny

from both consultants and owners; “...*but there are better ways to dealing with it [the pressure]*” than “*offering bribes*” and “*cutting corners*”. RespC insisted that these above-mentioned “rare” contractors have some of “*the highest ethical standard I have seen in the business*”. This is perhaps why it is so important to understand things from RespE and RespF’s perspective, because they are presenting us with insight into the other side: the side that is often overworked, under immense stress and working with “*extreme uncertainty*” – in the words of RespA, a PM who worked in both worlds.

The second unique theme presented by RespE during Q1 is seeing “ethics” as a truly abstract concept with no normative assignment: “*But what is your standard for ethics?...Like let us say one guy is really evil, and another is an angel: but they are both ‘ethics’ at the end of the day. So for me it is not something that is 1 to 10, it is something that simply exists.*” Perhaps pointing toward the idea that any human acting in any way is exhibiting his or her own subjective “ethics”. However, having made that point, RespE defaulted to simply using ethics as the other respondents have – as in, ascribing it an abstractly positive value, associating it with things like “competence”; “respect”; “forgiveness” etc., and even giving it in the very next sentence: “*For me I will say 10/10*” for importance in the project environment.

Finally for this part: RespE, almost similarly to (but not quite the same as) RespF and RespD, elaborated on how ethics is “good for business” but in a much more personal; and perhaps even selfish vein (at first glance at least):

“Look at the end of the day, the nature of our work, is closely linked with personal relationships. If your ethics are good, that means *respect* from the other party; respect from your team; respect from management; respect from your competitors. And also, you could personally shine.. like a person could have a certain added value to the project, but at the end of the day, your ethics is what makes you have a long career.”

So ethics is not only good for the bottom line vis-à-vis RespD and RespF; but can also be a way for the PM to shine and to climb the ladder. RespE explained to me that if your superiors see you as “ethical” then they will “give you assignments” and “trust you with money” and this will give you a “long career”. This is the long-term thinking presented by RespD and RespF; except here: for “yourself” not “the firm”. And also note how in RespF and RespE’s descriptions of project management in a highly relational sense: Relationships – especially with “the client” and with external stakeholders take center stage and are seen as crucial to these PMs perhaps because, for contractors, it is a matter of survival. It is the way by which they make money; while with the owners I interviewed: their firms have income from other sources, and projects are just part of a bigger business model.

After the structured part of the interview, I inquired further on this angle of using ethics as a way for career progression, and RespE elaborated that he definitely does not mean that one should “*tell-tale on a colleague or start some conflict in order to ‘put on a show’ in front of my boss?*” in order to “*get a certain promotion or something*”. Rather, he means that he is ethical, by default; and it just so happens that “*having good ethics for sure gives you an advantage over others.*” It is not that one should “act” ethical or deliberately manufacture ethical situations that show them in a good light. One should “be” ethical, and it just so happens that this comes with inherent benefits in the corporate environment.

Moving to Q2, both of these respondents gave unique answers (from both previous respondents, and from each other). RespF’s answer did not come as a surprise since he already mentioned how “*pricing is the most important stage*” where you need to be clear and honest with your client. According to RespF,

during the preparation of the project, if you establish cordial relations with the owner that are based on “honesty” and “transparency”, then everything that comes after will simply fall into place.

RespE’s answer however caught me off-guard. He told me that most ethical situations for him arise during “the business development stage” and during “the handover” of the project – making him the only respondent with this answer. Let us analyze his viewpoint:

- As for “business development”: it is because RespE likens it to “...sales. And for me, sales-people are the people who are most willing to dilute their ethics to reach their target. I could tell you this phone is amazing, it has the best camera, best memory blah blah because I want to sell it to you. So this is the sales stage.” It is important to note that RespE’s firm has a separate business development department, and so he does not personally find himself having to tell lies etc. during this stage. However, crucially, the “lies” or “exaggerations” that manage to find their way into the scope or the contracts will definitely affect the PMs’ work during execution (recall how ethical transgressions in the business development stage will “roll over...”, from RespB)
- As for the “handover” stage, RespE provides some exceptionally interesting and unique insights: “It is also one of the worst stages when it comes to ethics. Because the party -- and here I am talking about construction, and as a contractor -- I want to hand the project over. I want to leave the project. I want to be over and done with it, with the maximum profit and with the least amount of time. So this, for me, is the stage where there will be the highest conflict of interest and conflicts in ethics.” And in fact, the most important story we will analyze during Q4 confirms this.

Now RespE, in line with all the previous respondents we covered, still went back and described the execution phase as the phase where “actual dealing” happens:

“In the execution: you know my view, it is the most *real* thing in the project. It is where the blood sweat and tears and effort and exertion happen. So sometimes, I mean, there is no time to even consider ethical conflicts. But in the initial and ending stages, yes, you will have more time to consider such conflicts. So that is when you can have deception and chicanery.”

And here we see why RespE placed the weight of ethical situations on those two phases and not the execution. His argument (and we saw this with RespC) is that during the execution phase, you are so involved in the day-to-day activities that ethical situations – though they may arise – do not enter your cognitive faculty. He thinks that in order to “deceive” someone, you have to be conscious of that fact, and you only “have time” to do so during pre-execution and post-execution (particularly the handover.)

When it comes to Q3, here we see some familiar and essential themes revitalized. Both of our respondents are totally in favor of the “second school of thought” but with much elaboration needed.

For RespF, we see the same theme of a transition in the project environment happening; but this time, it is not due to an acquisition from the outside: he moved to a new construction firm in a new State and to new responsibilities. From our discussion, I came to understand that the environment he previously worked in was rough and rowdy and “heated arguments” were common place. In fact he told me of an instance when one of his subordinates started verbally abusing him – the project manager. But from what I understood, that environment was extremely “high pressure” and tempers were always flaring, so it did

not seem to be a “big deal” at the time. At his new project environment however, RespF is greeted with a new world marked with clear redlines, “values” and “rules”:

“...We were shouting at each other and stuff onsite. And at the end of the day, the environment, the culture you work in is what guides you in the right way. I mean it does not force you to do so, but it makes you..[pause] commit to its values and to its rules...And your experience plays a part of course, but at the same time you want to ‘read’ the place that you are working in at the end of the day, so like, you cannot just act the way you want all the time [pause]. Since you are working for a certain firm, you have to know what is what, you know? And I am *not talking* about codes here: for most things, the codes just are not applicable. If someone is stealing money from the project or someone is vandalizing the project, I will say I am calling the cops leave right now; I will not wait to consult the code, just as a simple example.”

Many old themes remerge here: standardized codes of ethics or conduct falling into disuse; the direct project environment you belong to affecting your conduct much more than any code can; the codes described as “theoretical/inapplicable” (recall RespA and look for this repeat with RespE). And so RespF concludes: *“You get these situations: you have to act from your head, you have to calculate in the moment, what is the situation. And when I was in [redacted], I dealt with situations differently than I deal with them here.”* And this I think is why he classified himself under the “second school”. I will return to elaborate on this when discussing RespF’s story.

Returning to RespE, we again find some fascinating and unique themes. To summarize our lengthy discussion, RespE initially describes his philosophy here

“...and I have never been a ‘by the book’ kind of guy. It happened, just by chance, that all the supervisors I worked under never worked ‘by the book’. And based on this, I am trying to continue in this way. And the biggest example I can give you on this is that I started the PMP module.. I started it, and I left literally from the second week. I did not continue. Because, sadly, I felt that everything they were saying was [expletive] in reality. You could not apply it in reality.”

This particular angle of finding the official, prescribed, “imposed” (as per Bredillet) ethical codes of conduct that come from the governing bodies of the project management industry to be “disconnected from reality” will sound familiar to anyone who has read Bredillet’s body of work. Also recall the question that was posed, in line with van der Hoorn and Whitty (2015); Bloch et al. (2012); Cicmil and Hodgson (2006b); and the 2013 KPMG project management survey report: why is the number of standardized project management methods/models/tools as well as certifications and memberships offered by its governing bodies (e.g. PMI) continually on the rise? Secondly, we also find that theme of your “supervisor; chief” having much more of an effect on your professional ethical conduct than any code ever could. But what I believe sets RespE apart from the other respondents, who also describe a similar philosophy, is that RespE does find an important use for such codes:

“...in some things when it comes to quality, and when it comes to other people, meaning, if I had a team member and they harmed or abused another one in my team: that is a red line. But most things, no! There is give and take, there is leeway; I do not return to the book at all for them. These things, you personally evaluate them in the moment: you can put yourself in

that person's shoes in these cases, like for example why did he not give me the correct information? Why was his report wrong? Why did the product he gave me have problems?"

From what RespE told me, for "99% of things" (in his words) one must "refer to simple human nature and psychology"; and one must empathetically put themselves in the other person's shoes when an ethical situation arises. But, when "there is abuse toward people; abuse toward the company you work for; abuse toward the client [aforementioned quality redlines]...", then he told me he would return "to the letter of the book" and use it to inflict as much punishment as professionally permissible. He, in fact, gave me an example from a past project: One of the workers was found tormenting a lizard he caught in one of the holes that were being dug for the solar panel support structures. He told me "Personally, I wanted to hit him. But instead, I simply found the most punishing clause in all the codes on animal abuse to fire him immediately without severance."

What is remarkable here is that I feel he is describing the having a baseline of codes with room for leeway on top from RespD's conversation. But the obvious difference is: RespD wants to utilize a good code of ethical conduct and good corporate protocol, while respecting the leeway for the purposes of the "humanitarian" situations that come up (like the apple story). While RespE mainly works with the leeway (copes; deals, by default), while utilizing the baseline of codes only for the severe cases when "punishment" is required.

And it is here that I think we can resolve the schism between personal and professional ethics for RespE. During our lengthy discussion, he explained to me his wisdom in detail: He sees project management as being very similar to life in most regards: "At the end of the day...not just in project management, in all of our lives, we do not live our lives by the book. Life is dynamic, it is. It does not have.. there is not a book that you can refer to and open it and say 'oh this is the solution to my problem under clause no. blah'...So I will say for 99% of things, you do not return to codes of ethics, you refer to simple human nature and psychology. So it is not like: oh I will refer to the PMI code, what does it say? I will refer to this school of ethics, what do they say? I will refer to the contractors' code, what does it say?" This helps him arrive at this very dynamic and pragmatic way of dealing with, mostly, the "people" in his projects. Recall how Rolfe et al. (2016) wanted us to see that project managers specifically, and typically face "issues of meaning" which mostly have human beings as the external referents, not inanimate objects. This is why they argued that we cannot rely on the epistemology of "disinterested objectivity" since it has little to no bearing on the issues that project managers regularly face.

So why did he make such a big deal about separation between personal and professional ethics at the beginning of the interview? Well as I discussed this more with him after the interview, it seems to be an issue of freedom:

"In your personal life, you do not have deadlines. You are your own boss, you do not have a manager. You have more options in your personal life and can therefore choose to go with the more humane options than when you are at work where you are limited. A small example, you have a subcontractor and he made problems for you. You can send him notice 1 then notice 2 then you have to terminate the contract. In your personal life...you can love a girl and she may hurt you once, twice, three times and you can stay with her. It is for sure not the same thing."

However, RespE did provide me with a hint at the “bridge” between the personal and the professional, which is “respect”: *“...it has to do with respect -- which is mutual between personal and professional life. So it is not just self-respect, it is the respect of the other people around you toward you; and you toward them. The circle around you: both in the firm and the within the project team.”* Which perhaps can explain why he has that zero-tolerance outlook toward “abuse” of any kind. He sees the respect one receives (as well as reciprocates) within the project as being of the same kind, and as having the same importance as the one receives and gives in the outside world – and hence, to RespE, mutual respect, just like in personal relationships, must absolutely be guaranteed in the professional environment. We can add this to the above link: the similarly dynamic, social, relationship-based and ever-changing nature of project management when compared to the outside world – and so how neither can really have a “guidebook”.

Moving to Q4 and Q5, the story regarding the most recent ethical situation that RespF faced was from his latest finished project and has a worrying new angle. His team was working with a subcontractor in order to finalize and deliver a medical suite, which included a number of surgery rooms. Suddenly, RespF received a call from the owner/medical facility telling him that the AC units had stopped working and that the temperature was dangerously rising in the surgery rooms (into the 70s Fahrenheit. RespF mentions that it is supposed to be “around 68 Fahrenheit” in surgery rooms). RespF immediately sprung into action and called the subcontractor in charge of the HVAC installations, “and he was like ok I will see what I can do blah blah blah”. RespF understanding the gravity of the situation then called some of the subcontractor’s workers who were onsite; but they told him that they were not the same people who had installed the system so they “will not tinker with it”. So RespF, logically, called the subcontractor once more to see what his plan for action was; knowing that there was at least one patient being operated on at this time so this was an emergency. And then, in RespF’s words: “...he started to shout at me, and telling me not to call him again, and that he will not take any more calls from me, and that if I wanted something done I should go there and do it myself, stuff like that...I was very upset, he was very disrespectful to me when all I was trying to do was get the emergency under control.” Now the worrying part is that RespF then went over to his own superior and told him the whole situation, expecting support from him. But, to RespF’s surprise, he told him to stick to protocol and just email him and not to get emotionally invested. Examine his words carefully:

“...my boss upset me even more, because he told me I should have just stuck to email...and that's when I realized that here well I must be a professional, even if a patient's life is in danger? My boss told me like ‘He doesn't want to talk to you? Fine just send him an email.’ He basically told me that if I emotionally invest myself like this, I cannot get any work done. He told me that this has happened to him countless times and ‘if you take it personally you cannot get any work done’. And this actually caused a rift between me and my boss, because this guy had disrespected me and abused me and he did not defend me and stuff like that. But at the end of the day, this is their system and this is how I will work from now on.”

Recall from earlier conversations with RespA, RespB, RespC and RespE on just how crucial your relationship with your direct superior is to your level and method of application of ethics in the workplace. How their superiors encouraged them to be go-getters, delegated authority, respected their input, trusted their judgment and encouraged them to take action as they deemed suitable. This cold, detached and somewhat jaded attitude of RespF’s superior by contrast led to some worrying results: *“...it was an emergency case, and we had to take action. And it got resolved, but now I know if anything happens I will not turn it personal I will just send emails to my superior and he can handle it.”* Not to

mention that RespF felt disrespected by the over-the-top rude and abusive responsive he got from the subcontractor (who later apologized in a future project) and expected his boss to “have his back”; but his boss told him “not to take it personally” when all RespF was trying to do was to look out for the patients’ wellbeing and comfort. This also goes against RespE’s principles where “abuse; respect” are redlines, and respect is the bridge between “the personal” and “the professional” realms. And the worrying angle here is presented in phrases like these: *“this is their system and this is how I will work from now on.”* Which leads me to conclude that RespF may adopt a more cynical and detached attitude toward his work, where he simply tries to cover his back and do everything by the book without getting personally involved – which was presented by his boss as a positive thing; while all of the respondents I interviewed saw it as a negative thing. During my second meeting with RespF, I learned that he is now seeking employment in a different State and at a different firm where he would feel more appreciated. So this might have also had negative consequences for the firm who could end up losing a competent project manager who is passionate about the quality in his work. If we assume that RespF views his diligent action as “*real; lived*” ethics, then direct ties can be established with RespG’s upcoming stress that part of the PM’s code of ethics should be that he/she chooses a workplace that respects these ethics and “places them at the forefront”. A last thing I would like to highlight here: recall from RespF’s descriptions of his previous employment, how that environment was described as “high-pressure” and “stressful” and so tempers were constantly flaring and “heated arguments” were commonplace. While this one seems to be an overly-sterile environment where no passion or personal involvement is allowed, perhaps pointing toward a middle ground between the two.

It is worthy of note however that, despite what happened, RespF maintains a good relationship with the subcontractors he works with in his projects. He also told me that the way you treat your subcontractors, not just the owners as previously covered, is in fact part and parcel of that “reputation” that nets you “long-lasting business” that he was talking about at the beginning. He told me of a peculiar policy at his current firm that highlights this: “...we have a philosophy at our company: if you bring a subcontractor like an electrical company for example to do something, you have to stick with them no matter how bad they are until the end of the project. No matter how bad: you can send emails, you can make them pay fines for delays etc., but in our firm it is seen as in very very bad form to call on a subcontractor, and they deploy all their workers and equipment... and then you terminate them in the middle of the project. So you have to be pragmatic, you *have to* finish the job.” This angle on the teammate-like relationship between contractors and subcontractors, with the owner on the opposite side will also come to the forefront during RespE’s stories, which we will now cover.

As mentioned earlier, RespE provided me with many stories from his current and recent projects: some of which entailed actions where he saw himself as the “bad guy”. The first story I want to cover is also the most recent and took place in his current project. Simply told, RespE has a very good mutual relationship with one of the subcontractors in this project with whom he has worked on multiple projects. This subcontractor approached him toward the end of the current project and told him to decrease the specification of thickness by two centimeters for a small stretch of service road inside the PV power plant. RespE, knowing that this subcontractor has come out with a major loss during this project, and knowing of their competence, diligence and their previous history, and feeling empathetic toward their situation approved this change on his own accord.

“Now this was not really about ethics, it was about resources. I knew the problems that this contractor had during the project. I knew that this project was a loss for him. So he asked me to reduce this material and I gave him the ok without referring to my company and without

referring to the client and without referring to anybody, and I took full responsibility. And when the client came and inspected the road, I lied and told him this is [X] cm. I told you the handover is the dirtiest phase in the project. The contractor came out happy, the client was happy, so I was happy.”

During our post-interview deliberations, RespE brought up the issue of “unfairness” and how it is always subjective; though it was in a different context, unrelated to the RQ. But I asked him then “So would you say that your decision to change the specification was ‘unfair’ to the client?” He replied by explaining that if the subcontractor had asked for a reduction of more than 2 centimeters, he would have refused. He said: “[X] was definitely over-engineered – especially for a service road that will be visited by a maintenance crew once every month. [X-4] would have disintegrated within 2 years. [X-2] is perfect.” (X refers to the original specified thickness as requested by the client). A few notes:

- The aforementioned theme of subcontractors and contractors being “teammates”, with the owner being on the opposite side of this equation is crystal clear here. Notice how the “*uncertainty*” and the not knowing whether or not you will make a profit, or perhaps even go bankrupt for contractors which RespA talked about were quite well understood by RespE. This is why he empathized with the subcontractor even though RespE’s firm (the main contractor) was turning a profit. As he said during my second meeting with him “*Today him. Tomorrow me.*” This was described by RespE as one of the many “conflicts of interest” that he faces especially during the handover phase. Recall how Kliem (2012) emphasized that project team members can get “too familiar” with certain suppliers they find to their liking – weakening objectivity, increasing needless dependence, and increasing the chances of conflicts of interest.
- Notice the theme of having an ethical core with leeway on top that RespE and RespD described return here: The core of the decision was delineated for RespE by his previous experience and knowledge of civil engineering requirements for the road. While the leeway allowed him to seek a situation which he described as “win-win-win” for the three parties involved. The subcontractor cutting his losses, enhancing his chances of survival and of working again in the future with RespE’s firm; the owner receiving a road that is functional and not “over-engineered” (as RespE describes it, but not with the original specification); and RespE having helped the subcontractor, and having delivered the functional product to the owner, but having had to lie during the handover phase, sees it as an all-round pragmatic success.
- RespE further expounded on this by telling me that, for many situations, it is not about doing the most ethical things you can; but more about “doing the least amount of non-ethical things...or trying to stop the most amount of non-ethical things from happening” reminding me of parallels to Ljungblom and Lennerfors (2018)’s “minimalistic” vs. “maximilastic” virtue ethics. And that, especially in project management, “Your role as a PM is to never judge things as *zero-one*. Things are never as simple as that. You take each case; and there is something in PM called tailoring, meaning in each case you are like a tailor measuring each person's trousers, shirts... at the end of the day, you are dealing with circumstances. *It is never zero-one*. It is not a binary system.” Reminding me of his comparisons between project management and dynamic life; and also providing me with more insight as to why the “second school” is so popular with the contractors I interviewed.

Another story RespE told me was from a recent project. RespE’s firm, having won a major contract, declared applications to tender open for a substantial work package that was worth in the vicinity of

\$300,000. One of the subcontractors that RespE was familiar with approached him with a friendly offer of a piece of real estate that was worth around \$30,000 if he were to be given the contract. RespE continues *“I immediately notified my manager, and this was one of the nominated suppliers you know, and I remember I did not notify my supervisor – actually I notified the CEO and I told him that X offered me blah blah and I want him to be eliminated from the nomination process. And he was, and the firm stood behind me, and there was no further discussion with him after that. That was it.”* A few things:

- RespE described to me in detail his experiences with bribery *“...in every project with every contractor whether directly or indirectly, you will face this thing. It ranges from a simple gift, like a mug or cigarettes or a cup of coffee, to, the most I was offered was a piece of real estate in the south of [redacted] so that this subcontractor would get a certain work package. Or maybe he will offer you a partnership: he will come and say ‘oh if you give me this tender you can be my partner in the project.’ So this is something you face daily.”* As well as his personal way of dealing with them: *“For me, up to a certain limit -- so that I am not lying to myself -- up to a certain limit, like a simple gift only if it is not linked with the person getting the business. After he gets the work package, once he has shown that he is technically and financially excellent and he won the tender, then if he offers me a very small gift, like a pen or a drink I may accept it.”*
- Again notice how the offering party always seems to come as a “friend”, and how the PM, despite not using any codes or standards, always realizes what is going on: *“...a bribe is a bribe. Whether it is described in the code or not. A bribe is a bribe.”* And notice how in both stories we delved into that describe a person-to-person attempted bribe, the PM always runs to a superior, and thankfully, in both case, the “firm stood behind me”. This shows just how crucial the immediate environment and direct management are to ethics: one would not have to stretch their imagination too far to imagine an alternative scenario where either RespE’s or RespC’s superiors simply took the bribes for themselves and what deleterious effects that would have had on the PMs’ ethics in the future.
- Notice the disparity in the reactions of RespE between the subcontractor who was struggling and secretly requested the decrease in specification without offering anything to RespE; and the one who directly offered him a piece of property for a certain scope. This disparity, I think, demonstrates RespE’s personal code of ethics that he obviously designed for himself, modeled on the current and previous supervisors he respects (who *“did nothing by the book”* but he still sees them as both “competent” and “ethical”). This reminded me of how Coeckelbergh theorized that “know-how” can only be transmitted through intimate personal learning relations, and that the moral agent initially gets their knowledge from the master. But ultimately, the moral agent follows their own personal trajectory as they start gaining experience for themselves.

And the last story I want to cover because it includes two themes that are quite unique. The first of which is that the respondent started with this (an admission of guilt) *“It was something that I did actually, and it makes me unhappy with myself. I was an [expletive] and to this day I still feel bad because of it.”* The story was during his first job as project manager: RespE had six interns that were working under him for a salary, and whom had passed their one-year employment mark by a month. Now *“in the [country name] labor laws, any employee who stays on for more than a year is considered a permanent assignment.”* And are basically deserving of full-employment benefits like medical care, retirement payments etc. The HR manager of the firm approached RespE and told him to basically make them sign contracts of a *“one-year duration, in hindsight”* – that is for the year that they had already served; and within that contract their resignation was basically implied. RespE explains:

“What do I mean by that? Let us say you are my employee and you were interning and working with me for a year and taking a salary; and there was no contract between us. And in the law: after a year and one day you would be a permanent employee, you would have all the benefits of permanent employment. So that the company avoids this ‘problem’, I made them sign their resignations one day before they would have finished one year; but they had already passed the year! You see, they did not know the labor law. I knew this piece of information from the HR, and I was requested to do this by the HR. I made them sign their resignations thereby stripping them of their labor rights.”

A few things:

- Despite the HR pressuring RespE, who was inexperienced at the time (his first job), RespE still holds himself responsible and feels awful about this. He told me during our second interview that he has, ever since that day, taken extra care of his subordinates and always makes sure that they are well-treated and well-paid by management, because of what happened back then. And now that he knows his “powers and responsibilities” (recall this stress from RespA), he will never allow anything like that to happen again to his project team. It can also explain his continuous mention of “respect” in the workplace as well as his zero-tolerance policy toward “abuse” to his project team.
- RespE crucially says this: *“This is not strictly speaking illegal but it is highly unethical. It is a dance around the law.”* When I spoke to RespA-CO32 for the second time, he also mentioned how most bribes and such things are not done in a strictly-speaking illegal way. How in some countries he worked in, *“the bribe is included in the Bill of Quantities as a certain percentage”*, and everyone just *“knows and accepts it”*. RespG will also zero in on this theme of ethical deliberation covering the gaps in the realm of the “gray area” – where the laws are rendered insufficient or unclear. This will all sound familiar to anyone who has read books like Lennerfors (2019) or Kliem’s Ethics in Project Management (2012) where he emphasizes that if ethics were meant to deal with black and white issues then ethics would be “a no-brainer”. That project managers almost always deal with gray issues and that the firm needs project managers who are high in “ethical awareness”, because only they can deal with such dilemmas (when right from wrong is unclear). Also recall how RespE continuously repeated that the situations he daily faces in his project management world are “never *ZERO-ONE*.”

RespG-O10

I find that my conversations with RespG-O10 are apt to end the Result section as, throughout our discussions, he re-introduced many of previously discussed talking points often repackaging them in his own unique formulation, and often in a very concise way and through the lens of his own experience. RespG, for the past ten years, has been working as a project manager in the software development industry, more specifically, software development within the medical industry in the United States of America. We will see how the dynamic and time sensitive work environment of software development, when paired with the very real risks and benefits toward human life vis-à-vis the medical industry, which is regulated by the FDA in the US, shape RespG's experiences when it comes to applied ethics.

As we opened the discussion with Q1, RespG provided me with an answer that we are all familiar with now, ethics or virtue as “doing”: “I think it's doing the right thing...” in line with all the previous respondents. And, throughout the discussion, and due to the very nature of his line of work: this doing of what is ethical was also described in the same “dynamic” and “continuous” way that RespA and others had highlighted. Shown in quotes like: *“it's basically a risk management exercise that you are doing continuously...”* and *“...this is a question that you are continuously answering: when you are actually doing it. In your executing, right?”* and *“...not necessarily a one-time thing. It's continuous.”* And if you recall from my discussions with the previous respondents, there was always the theme of seeing ethics as tied with competence; in getting the job done; giving the customer the best possible result etc. But it is perhaps here that RespG provides me with the clearest and most eloquent summary of this theme: “I think it's, well, it is not ‘equal’ to your competence...it's not that your ethics is more important. It's.. your ethics are *part of* being competent, so it's very important.” And in the same breath, linking this and reiterating the angle of ethics always being the “long-term” option which is “good for business”, even if you do not see immediate returns (seen especially with RespC, RespD, RespE and RespF):

“...because being ethical – as I said doing the right thing – pays well in the long run so even if you're trying to be pragmatic and think of things from, you know, what am I getting back from that? There's definitely a way to capitalize on that [being ethical], so it pays off in the long run...even if when you're doing it [doing what is ethical] you're not, you know paying attention to what the reward is going to be, right? But I do believe that doing good.. the right thing.. will always pay off in the long run and as I said: it's *part* of the competency model for you.”

And more importantly, RespG packages the previously seen topic of personal vs. professional ethics in a very concise way. He believes, in line with RespA and the others (with the exception of RespE – at least at first glance) that it is inconceivable to see those as separate:

“...when I was discussing whether I think your personal and professional journey should you know.. well, to me, they are the same right? I don't think they're separate, like, you know ‘ethical at work’ and not outside of work, or vice versa [laugh]. You're just either this way or that way.”

And so it is perhaps *both*: that the invested project manager sees his “professional journey” as his “personal journey” *and* that his competence is, for all intents and purposes, equated with his/her very identity – with ethics being an integral part of this identity. Reminding me of RespB's “*competence is you*” and RespA's “*Ethics is the only subject for me where you can't be half-pregnant; either you are*

pregnant or you are not pregnant.” Though with RespA, I felt that he was conversely describing ethics as equated with his identity, with competence being part of that identity. In both cases however, it behooves us to note just how intertwined “competence/finishing the job/doing a good job...” with “ethics/doing what is good...” with the very identity of the project manager.

If you recall from earlier, RespG had described his application of ethics in his work as being analogous to something like a “continuous risk-management exercise”, always stressing the “continuous” and “dynamic” nature of the ethical considerations that come up. Not only that, but he also repeated something that RespE had covered, that it is never quite binary: “there's not necessarily a binary yes or no answer to everything”; rather, “a best judgment call on the issue...with the best information that they [the decision-makers] have at the time” is made. A decision-maker who is continuously coping with his environment and making ethical decisions based on the current context; rather than starting from fixed ends “I wouldn't go...you know, what would Jesus do? I think it's embedded” would probably lean more toward the second school then, especially when they say “It's not school one. It's not school one. I wouldn't go for that.” But there is much more nuance to RespG's answers, and we need to look deeper.

Another crucial tie I wanted to highlight between RespG and RespE is that “*what could be, you know, considered legal can be immoral*”. But RespG goes further providing more depth to this theme:

“And you could do what's legal, you could go along with it. But in the long run, when you know both the the social, as well as the scientific understanding of the whole community of a topic, something specific might change with time, or let's say evolve with time. Your previous actions actually come back to haunt you; haunt your reputation, or you know the products that the people are using.”

And so doing what is *ethical* not just what is legal is “...let's say less rewarding sometimes, in the short-term; but in the long-term it usually pays off.”

This sequence reminded me of RespB's description of many people in the project environment who are working “by the book” yet without “care” for quality or resources; and how “If they have ethics within they would be more caring.” Reinforcing the idea that “real” or “lived” ethics are tied with “caring”; while being a “by-the-book” person does not guarantee that you care at all (“minimalistic” attitude as per Ljungblom and Lennerfors, 2018). Ethics are also presented here as the solver of the “gray area”, where laws are deemed insufficient. With this sequence, RespG ties the ethics vs. legality angle, with “caring” and with being ethical being “good for business in the long-term”. And also recall RespA's long elaboration on how the subjective becomes objective: how we get what we call “wrong and right”. And how it is our “privilege as engineers...but also our duty” to correct things once we find out what we had been doing “wrong” all along. Fascinating link between these two despite having a considerable experience differential and working in completely different fields and environments. Another important link (“consistency” or “systemization” of one's own ethics) will soon be elucidated between these two.

I believe that what separates RespG from the other respondents and what explains his aforementioned, as well as upcoming points of focus all stem from the particular type of work he does:

- RespG basically describes working on code for the medical industry as “always a work-in-progress”. While, by contrast, all of the previous respondents worked in fields where there are clear “milestones”

and start/finish lines. In simple terms: a finished building or a finished medical wing or a finished solar panel farm or a finished hangar etc.

- The products that RespG works with have direct benefits and risks that are immediately tangible to human health. In his words “It's constantly evaluating...The risk assessment, you know, you submit it to the FDA, for example; they're okay with it, they're okay with moving forward: just highlighting or writing a warning or you see it on TV like that medication could cause *death*. How is that acceptable right? It basically comes from, you know, yes you could cause death but that's a very very low probability, one in millions. However the benefit of the medication for other millions, you know, are so high...So what is ethical in this case? You don't know right?”

So if what you are working on is constantly seen as a “work-in-progress” where “anomalies” are always challenging you and your team, and “...depending on the anomaly, each time you fix it, two more pop up”. If there is always room for improvement, always, then how do you decide when you have done enough? Keeping in mind the direct effect you will have on the public's health. And this in fact is at the core of RespG's ethical dilemma. In fact, when I asked him for examples of recent and significant ethical dilemmas (Q4 and Q5), he basically told me that he does not have to think because “the biggest, the most recent”, the one he faced yesterday, and the one he will face tomorrow are all the same one:

“What is good enough?”

It is evident here, and will become even more evident that RespG as well as his team's “biggest ethical dilemma” is directly tied with the finished product: ethics and competence are seen as one here. And how does RespG tackle this daily, constant ethical dilemma? We have already seen that he does not subscribe to a specific school of thought like deontology or utilitarianism etc., where he can say “What is it that I can do to bring the most amount of joy to the highest number of people?” and such. Well RespG provides me with some multi-faceted, and highly intricate answers to this question:

In summary, he told me that on the PM's personal/professional journey (which, as we have seen are equated to each other), the PM develops something he termed a “personal/professional mission” along the way. And part of that mission *“part of it is alleviating pain; part of it is doing the right thing; part of it is you know, returning value to the shareholders...”* and these personally/professionally-derived goals that are highly-contextual to the current environment basically *“are kind of guiding you through your project or you know through your ‘progressing’ in your career or outside...”* And from this “mission”, you “establish guidelines for yourself” e.g. *“on what might harm a patient. You don't say what would, you know, a person do in my situation? You already established guidelines for what is severe? What is harmful? What is acceptable? What is deferrable, in terms of you know, this can be dealt with in a future project?”* And so, in the end “it's basically a risk management exercise that you continue doing continuously...” RespG crucially stresses, in agreement with what RespA said (recall his focus on “consistency”) that one must “systemize” their ethics along the way, implying that there be some inherent respect for precedents and such so that one does not solve an ethical dilemma in one manner and then a similar one “based on their *mood* on the day.” In his words, *“...so basically, you're taking a more ‘systematic’ approach”* to arrive at your own personally/professionally-derived code. Recall when Coeckelbergh was elaborating on how his moral craftsmanship idea should not be conceptualized as a mental, theoretical exercise but always as a “worldly, practical exercise”. And how it logically followed that ethical dilemmas cannot ever be solved once and for all (as “rationalist” schools such as deontology or utilitarianism or the Platonic “moral super-agent” would like us to believe) with the use of decreed

moral principles. Rather we have to “learn moral creativity” and “grow in its use”. This means that if we discern a solution to an ethical problem at one point in time and within a specific context, there is not any guarantee that we can use the same solution next time. It seems that RespA and RespG definitely take this into account, and then add consistency; systemization of one’s own ethical code as a mediator within their respective ethical frameworks.

And when I asked him “Well, doesn’t the FDA dictate this stuff?” He replied by basically saying that the FDA, as an organization, practically clears itself once it “attaches a label...” that says one in ten million people may die. But that, for him, the project manager in charge of designing and getting the product to market:

“You could go and say well that’s one person *or* you know you could think it could be someone close to me, or close to someone else, or even someone I don’t know but they have people that they care about them, is the risk. Or does the benefit outweigh the risks?...It’s it’s always the biggest dilemmas: You have something and it’s like what is the right thing to do? Continue fixing, or don’t continue fixing and get the best product out there? This is what you end up with each product, *especially with software*.”

And so while the FDA might view it from a legal and liabilities perspective, and view the one in ten million as a statistic; the PM in charge of launching the product sees it as a “human”, which makes the ethical (*not* legal) considerations grave for RespG and his team. Not to mention that he must maintain the project triangle in mind at all times: “...the three constraints of a project like you know, your schedule your budget or your scope. Then you need to, you start having the propensity to compromise and to reach a resolution for what’s happening or for the issue that you have and that’s when ethics becomes *the center of the discussion*, you know, hopefully.” Which is also why RespG places the most weight, as a theme we have seen a lot before, on the “execution phase” because it is when the “doing/dealing” with these dilemmas actually happens: “You could end up cutting corners to save the timeline of the project by not fixing an anomaly or by, you know down-grading [inaudible] to the patient or whatever so that’s something that’s you know, that could happen during execution – especially during verification-validation: they face their phases. So it’s more, you know, on the ‘doing’ aspect of the project rather than the ‘planning’ for it.”

And speaking of his team, RespG has another crucial tool in the shed for this constant ethical dilemma:

He describes his role as a project manager as more of a “link that connects all other links”. As a “powerful observer” who should not just “observe” but “at the same time, the person who’s just pushing for accountability in terms of ethics.” He also describes how many of the decisions are not taken “unilaterally”. Recall RespA’s similar depiction as well as RespB and RespC’s descriptions of their bosses. The reasons for this democratic culture as described by RespG stem from both the nature of the work they produce; as well as the ethical dilemmas they all face (which are directly tied to the products):

Consider: “...*you know what makes sense to someone who’s on the engineering side as safe to the patient, for example, might not be...safe from the side of the clinical team...so the clinical team is thinking well ‘there’s still a risk over there’*”. And RespG continues on how it is the PM’s prime duty to be “*basically responsible for holding everyone accountable; but at the same time helping facilitate these discussions. And raising these issues when things could go without being observed. And kind of transfer it into a point of discussion that is cross-functional.*” In the Discussion, this will be compared back to Kliem (2012) and

Coeckelbergh's moral craftsmanship as always being "social". RespG then goes on to explain that having a team of competent and ethical people around you assuages the burden when making these tough ethical decisions. That when he, or anyone else working on the product finds themselves faced with some of the monumental dilemmas like "risky launch vs. wait and lose money" etc., "do not have to" and "do not want to" make these decisions on their own, and so gather and try to come to a solution together. Direct ties with Coeckelbergh's "moral worker": who always works with others; and how "moral improvement" should always be conceptualized as a collaborative project can be seen here. RespG highlights, like all other respondents, just how crucial the surrounding environment is in the development and application of ethics:

"...but also it's important for the place that you're working in to have some guiding principles for, you know, what is ethical; what's not. Because as a person there's.. Sometimes the pressure that I go under, you know, might distract me or fog my judgment. But when you have a process coming from the culture itself and the ecosystem of the organization that you're working in that pushes you for being ethical and rewards you for being ethical. It makes things easier for you."

RespG even goes so far as to say that the aforementioned "personal/professional mission" *includes* within it that the PM "chooses" such a workplace. The argument is, at some point in their career, by virtue of their accomplishments and their experience, the PM will get the opportunity to choose where he/she works and choosing such a place where "ethics are at the forefront" becomes their responsibility.

RespG confirms RespD's stress on how many firms have recently begun pushing for more focus on ethics: "...*the place you work at and that's why you see a lot of companies are moving more and more and putting ethics at the forefront of their mission because you know, it's it's good for everyone.*"

Ultimately then, we need to make an addition to RespG's applied ethics methodology. So as he, the PM, is "always trying to do the right thing...trying to be ethical let's call it", and as he takes and gives "feedback and input" from and to the project environment: he, alongside the project environment, are collectively, in his words, "*let's call it: drawing that ethics roadmap*" for him, the entire organization, and perhaps, the two industries (software development and medical.)

V-2 Discussion

Research Question: “How do ethics permeate the lived experience of the modern project manager?”

In order to tackle the Research Question, and in order to contextualize the themes and concepts as they apply to the phenomenon of ethics within the project management world, I will start by providing answers to four questions that are at the core of the issue, and then end with the Composite Summary.

Ultimately, for this part and for the upcoming parts of the Discussion: Due to the phenomenological approach producing results that are highly unique (Hycner, 1985, p. 300) seeing as they aim at describing the lived experience of seven individual project managers who work in different fields, environments, and who are coming from various backgrounds and are at different levels within their respective career ladders, the reader is encouraged to also read the individual stories in the Results section; as the summary, no matter how intricately-composed, could never do each justice.

What exactly is “ethics” to these experienced project managers?

As we saw from talking to these respondents: there is a clear split between what they termed “theoretical; a box to be ticked; survey...” ethics and “*real; lived; actual; applied...*” ethics. The respondents had differing ideas on these two types of ethics and how they interplay. One saw the former as a “golden ideal” that is unreachable but important to “respect” and “calibrate” one’s compass by. Another thought that, for most of one’s professional life, the type of ethics you possess are of the former kind until you are in a position of power and then it becomes “applied” by virtue of the “necessity” of the position. In fact all respondents, despite never reading Aristotle’s work, described ethics in terms of “doing”, or in terms of virtues that are “in action” e.g. from RespG “*it’s doing the right thing*”; from RespD “*Do the best conduct*”; from RespB “*...you are ‘doing’ virtue. It’s correct action.*” From RespC “*To act as per...*” The ethics, and virtues highlighted by the respondents (such as “integrity; trust-worthiness; honesty; courage; wisdom; forgiveness; justice...”) were all described in a “dynamic; continuous; trial and error; a process; a journey...” sense. A few of the respondents (especially RespA and RespD) viewed this journey as culminating in “peace of mind; sound sleep...” All of the respondents, especially RespB; RespC and RespG, viewed decision-makers who strictly follow the first type of ethics as uncaring and negligent about their work despite working “by the book” likening it to dogmatic thinking “*I wouldn’t go...what would Jesus do? I think it’s embedded.*” RespD wanted to design the ethics training programs at his firm so that they instill a sense of ethics of the “*real; lived*” kind – so that the employees “want to be ethical”; not to “act” ethical out of “fear” or a desire to simply be “in compliance”. RespB saw that many employees in his project environment demonstrate the first type of ethics, “by-the-book” to use his words, while being wasteful and negligent of company resources. And that if only they had “ethics *within*, they would be *more caring*”. Crucially, “ethics” to these PMs was always linked with their “competence; doing a good job; finishing the work (with quality and on time); getting the best deals; when do we release (an app)?...” as there seemed to be a sweeping trend from all of the respondents toward unifying the “personal” and “professional” journeys highlighted in RespA and RespG’s stress that there can be no such thing as an ethical project manager who is not ethical outside of work. RespB and RespG equate competence with their very identity, with “ethics” being a “core; very important part” of that identity; while RespA saw ethics as his identity and source of “power”, with his competence being part of that identity. In any case, all respondents for the most part, described “ethics”, “competence” and “identity” in a highly interchangeable manner. RespE and RespC initially answered with a potential split in mind

between “personal” and “professional” ethics, but we ultimately learned that they view “project management”, with its “dynamic; human; relationship-based” considerations as very similar to life itself.

RespA was also quick to highlight the theme of contrasting angles of approach to ethical considerations in the project environment “...*you have to ask yourself: Are you working for yourself? Are you working for a government? A big company? Directly with the owner? With your own money? It depends on where you are*” but he also stressed that there definitely exist such things as “right” and “wrong”, and that the “right” thing to do is usually the more difficult, and is ultimately decided by “the millions” of that era (refer to our discussion on the objective and the subjective). He and RespG went on to describe doing the “right; ethical” thing as doing what is ethically congruent at this time, since “technological; sociological; ethical” considerations are always in flux; and it is our “privilege as engineers” but also “our duty” to correct our behavior (both in operational and ethical capacities) as these landscapes change. RespA, RespC, RespD, RespF and RespG go on to stress that being ethical might not always pay in the short-term but always pays in the long run for the firm, that ethics is good for “business; the firm; the project; the bottom-line; longevity...” while RespE stresses that it is good for the PM herself since being ethical, or being known as ethical by management, “definitely gives you an edge over others.”

And so the first sort of ethics, while sometimes referred to in a positive light as the “golden ideal”, is by that same token also referred to as “inapplicable; unreachable; detached from reality; unreasonable; insufficient” and by RespD “too long; complex”. And the second type of ethics is seen as “the *real; lived* ethics” that spring “*from within*”: all of the respondents described their ethics in this vein. As stemming from personal and professional experiences that the project manager dealt with along the way, and as dynamic: growing as these experiences do. Even those respondents (e.g. RespE and RespC) who initially described different ethics being applied in their personal and professional lives, went on to explain that they see project management as being very similar to life itself – relational, dynamic and “never binary” and “not having a rulebook” and ever-changing etc.; and how “99% of situations” can be resolved in the context in which they arise using “simple human nature and psychology”. This is why all respondents to Q3 opted for either “the second school/philosophy”: that of the experienced project manager who utilizes a personal code that was forged by these experiences to handle/cope/deal with ethical dilemmas and situations as they arise in their specific context. Or a marriage between the second school and the first school: where there exist a “baseline; redlines; core...” of ethics delineated by the professional codes of ethics or engineering; with “leeway; pragmatism; wisdom; room for creativity...” on top that allows for this default state of coping to take place, and in the case of RespD, for “necessary wisdom”, “contingency plans” and “humanitarian” action to take place. The “codes; standards; protocols” were utilized by RespE for example, only when punitive action was deemed necessary (when abusive behavior took place; or when quality standards were not met etc.) RespB said that he felt it should be “70% second school 30% first school” as he uniquely equated the second school, or having “*real ethics within*” with actually “*caring*” about one’s work. RespA uniquely saw the second school (or his default way of coping with ethical considerations using his personal code that he developed through decades of trial and error) as the way by which he can “approach” that unreachable “golden ideal”.

RespF demonstrated the second school when he pushed his subcontractor for a solution to the emergency in that medical wing; while his boss told him to stick to protocol and “just email him” which RespF saw as detached and jaded, and which is why RespF is seeking new employment. RespG described how the FDA delineates redlines for his industry, how regulators basically see the risks toward human life from a purely “legalistic” perspective and are satisfied with just having a “label” that says one in ten million can die, but how for him and his team it is a “human life”, and so this constitutes a dynamic and constant

ethical struggle: “What is good enough? When do we stop developing?...” And so “ethics” were also seen (particularly stressed by RespA, RespE and RespG) as the solver of the “gray area” dilemmas where the “laws; regulations; codes...” are deemed fallible (A), silent (E) or insufficient (G).

The professional codes of ethics such as those from PMI, IPMA etc. were described by every single respondent as either not being used at all, or as having fallen into disuse. In fact, RespE started a PMP module and “left from the second week” because he felt that everything they were teaching was completely detached from reality. In every case of person-to-person bribery, the party on the receiving end instantly “realized what was happening” and rejected the bribe then notified management; but without having to refer to any code to do so: *“a bribe is a bribe...whether it is described in the code or not, a bribe is a bribe”*. And in fact two of the respondents who rejected such bribes had never been introduced to such codes by their university nor their firm. And one of them (RespE) had constructed a personal code precisely to deal with these situations: Only accepting small gifts e.g. a pen, a drink, a ticket *after* the tender process is over – modeled after the way his past and present superiors deal with such offers.

In short: All respondents described a kind of “reservoir of ethics” that is built through real-life personal and professional experiences, and that stems from many sources “home; temple; university...” and if RespD has his way with his training programs, “the firm” itself. This reservoir is dynamic and never stops being developed; and it “arises from *within*; shines...” in the specific context of an ethical dilemma/situation. When this happens, the PM “wants to” act in a manner that he views as “ethical” and never stops to consider that he is being forced to or that he simply “wants to be in compliance” or, in RespE’s words, that he wants to “act” in an ethical manner so that his superiors are impressed; or in RespD’s words that he just wants to “tick a box” that says he is anti-corruption or anti-child labor etc. This kind of ethics can be complimented and does interplay with codes and standards in different ways; but in all the stories I heard, the respondents describe the resolution in terms of “virtues”: Temperance in the many cases of rejected bribes (due to years of struggle for RespA); Courage in RespC when he was a young PM and was being challenged by a powerful and corrupt supplier; Wisdom in these respondents who figured out what was happening without having to refer to any code, and for RespG, in deciding “what is good enough” to release on the market; Diligence in RespB and RespF (who felt it was his duty to fix the problem in the medical wing, despite his boss being nonchalant); Forgiveness in RespD with the apple story and Justice in dealing with the corrupt contractor who was making illegal payments and so on.

And how important is it in the context of project management?

Whenever I asked this question (with slightly different wording in Q1), every single respondent with the exception of one gave me an answer of 10/10 or above (“200/10” by RespA; “20/10” by RespB). Some, like RespA and RespB, see ethics as being “at the core” of their very “identity”; and the root of their “power”. Others opted for less poetic, but still descriptions of how important ethics is to the field, by saying that “Without ethics...there is no project management”. This is because project management, as non-surprisingly described by every one of the respondents, is highly relational: with RespD describing it as “the sum game” and “a complete world”. Clockwork where for every gear to function, there are hundreds of others; for every successful execution by the project team, there is a diligent contractor etc. The project managers overwhelmingly describe a close and intimate affinity with their project teams: some saw them as an extension of themselves; one in particular (RespE), after a previous ethical transgression, does all he can to ensure they are well-respected and well-paid by the line organization. Then they all describe the external stakeholders: those who work with multinational projects describe governmental authorities and customs clearance agents; those on the owner side describe contractors,

suppliers and consultants; those on the contracting side describe quality control actors and subcontractors. We saw that ethics are crucial because, where transactions are concerned, without “trust; fairness; integrity...” there can be no “successful completion” of projects. Contracts are not sufficient because, in RespE’s words, *“The contract is the bible. But how can I trust you to finish the job...if I haven’t worked with you before?”* and in RespD and RespF’s experience, most long-term/repeat business comes from “reputation” and honest and cordial relationships with clients, firms and subcontractors. Contractors in particular describe how central good relationships are, which are based on “trust; fairness; integrity; transparency...” because it is their primary source of income. While the owners I spoke to have other venues for income, with projects being a part of a larger business model. Ethics is not only good for business from a firm-perspective, RespE gave the unique insight of how “being ethical” leads to career progression due to management “trusting you; giving you more assignments...” but crucially, one should not simply manufacture ethical situations, or “act” as if they were ethical; they must “be” ethical and this happens to “give you an advantage over others” who are not.

From RespA, RespC, RespD, RespF and RespG we learned that there are mainly two types of firms: those who utilize “long-term” thinking: who “place ethics at the forefront” even if there is no profit to be made in the short-term; even if they can “get away with just being in the clear – legally speaking”; but who know that “ethics always pays in the long-run”. And those who utilize “short-term” thinking: those who sometimes, not only neglect ethics within their firms, but also instruct their employees to “do the opposite; rob their clients...” and when the resources start becoming scarce, these employees start “robbing” their own firms, and overnight “you will hear that the biggest contracting company XandY vanished, it is no more there.” RespD was particularly targeting contractors within his field and from RespC, we learned that “90% of contractors” in his field employ “short-term” thinking; but that this fact only makes the “rare” ethical contractor that much more of a “joy” to find and work with.

Due to the importance of ethics to “the bottom-line”, RespD wanted to simplify the codes of ethics and make the ethical training programs at his firm more “bottom-up” focused where the employees themselves come to a deeper understanding and start “living ethics” and “wanting to be ethical”; not just wanting to “act” out of fear, or to be in compliance. And from our discussion with RespE and RespF, we saw things from the contractor side: the side that is often working with immense “uncertainty”, “stress” and “pressure”; and how ethical dilemmas, for them, are “never zero-one”; how they almost always fall into “gray areas” where “It is legal, but is it ethical?” Perhaps RespD’s training programs can help firms both on the owner and contractor sides. RespG’s angle of how this applies to his project management work was concerned with the “cross-functional” and the “multi-disciplinary” planning and communication that needs to continuously be performed, by him, “the link that connects all links”. How he continuously needs to raise awareness for ethical dilemmas and push for accountability while facilitating these discussions in order to come to collective, non-unilateral solutions. RespA described his ethical responsibility toward his team as “taking all the responsibility for all the ideas, while taking none of the credit” – how he needs to entrust, motivate and encourage his team in order to always work with the best ideas; how their competence is directly tied with his competence as a PM, and how his ethics are the way by which this tie can manifest. And so, the end result/culmination of “being ethical” was described by all respondents in one of two ways:

- Professionally: The successful and competent completion of milestones or entire projects “with quality, under-budget or on-time” (through for example “getting the best deal on the market; extracting the best ideas from your team; having a reputation for being ethical/having integrity leading to repeat/long-term business or longevity in the field” etc.)

- Personally: With “peace of mind; sound sleep; a sense of pride when your sons and daughters look at you...” But no respondents described this sort of personal peace or satisfaction exclusively. They always also linked “being” or “doing” what is ethical with “finishing the job.” And RespE uniquely highlighted a personal-professional result: “personal success; career progression” when management thinks of you as “ethical” and starts trusting you with more assignments.

And where in the project life-cycle are ethics most needed?

- A. Pre-execution: We saw just how important the different pre-execution phases mentioned by the respondents were to their projects, and how valuable ethics can be during these phases. From RespA, RespB, RespC, RespD, RespE and RespF we learned that it is during this time that the contracts between the different stakeholders are drafted and signed; it is when “money” and “transactions” start changing hands. RespD and RespF particularly stressed how “transparency; honesty; integrity; trustworthiness” are of the essence here and how building your relationships and contracts on these foundations with your contractors, suppliers and governmental authorities (from RespD’s perspective); and with the owners and your subcontractors (from RespF’s perspective) are the way by which you gain “reputation; longevity; repeat business; long-term success...” From RespB and RespE, we learned that ethical transgressions that take place during the “planning; business development” stages will “roll over; bleed into” the execution phase. How “lies” and “exaggerations” that find their way into the contracts/agreements will negatively affect the PM’s efficacy during execution. We also learned that the “design; planning; business plan; feasibility study” stages are seen as the “reference; origin” point to which the rest of the project will be continuously compared. From RespA “...and everything is successful when the goals *for planning and design* are successful”.
- B. Execution: This stage was mentioned and described by every single respondent as the stage where actual “dealing; coping; doing; acting...” happens. From RespE “...it is the most *real* thing in the project. It is where the blood sweat and tears and effort and exertion happen.” From RespC “In the planning..., the business case...we have assumptions. In the execution, we have the *real* or the *actual* development of the project happening in front of your eyes.” And so many respondents argued that it is during this stage that ethics become most pertinent because it is when you actually start “dealing” with all these different stakeholders and tools, while keeping the project triangle in mind at all times (as RespG explained). However, others (especially RespC and RespE) argued that during this phase, one is, for the most part, coping in lieu of cognitive reflection; that they are not “reflecting” or “thinking...things [ethical dilemmas/situations] through” during this stage. And so RespE continues “...*I mean, there is no time to even consider ethical conflicts. But in the initial and ending stages, yes, you will have more time to consider such conflicts. So that is when you can have deception and chicanery.*” It is obvious that these two respondents are linking their morality and application of ethics with conscious reflection on ethical matters; but in their day-to-day, they just “*work right and so...have nothing to fear.*” For RespE, ethical dilemmas arise and are reflected upon, and ethical decisions (such as to lie or to tell the truth) all occur during pre and post-execution (particularly the handover phase). But for all other respondents, and in line with all of their respective definition of “*real ethics*” as always being “*applied; lived*”, they saw the execution phase as being synonymous with this “application of ethics” to deal with ethical situations and dilemmas that continuously arise during this stage. Perhaps no better example can be provided on this than RespG’s “one and only; biggest; continuous” dilemma: “What is good enough?”

- C. Post-execution: This is particularly unique to RespE, who as a contractor, during the “handover phase”: *“I want to hand the project over. I want to leave the project. I want to be over and done with it, with the maximum profit and with the least amount of time. So this, for me, is the stage where there will be the highest conflict of interest and conflicts in ethics.”* Such as the triple-sided dilemma with the service road covered in that section.

However, it must be stressed that one of the most recurring themes during my interviews was seeing ethics as “indivisible”. From RespA *“In all phases, your compass should be on”* and from RespD *“...you cannot divide and say I need it here more than here.”* And this is tied with the project managers that I interviewed equating their “professional” journey with their “personal” one. RespG elegantly summarizes this *“...when I was discussing whether I think your personal and professional journey should you know.. well, to me, they are the same right? I don't think they're separate, like, you know ‘ethical at work’ and not outside of work, or vice versa [laugh]. You're just either this way or that way.”*

And what are the main factors influencing ethics in project management?

The respondents were quite emphatic on the idea that what they termed “the environment; the surrounding culture; the corporate culture” which crucially includes “leadership” as being one of the biggest factors when it comes to the propagation and application of ethics in project management:

- It dictates, both directly and indirectly, what behaviors are permissible and what behaviors are not. Recall RespF’s earlier environment where shouting and “heated arguments” were seen as commonplace, and his new one which was described as too sterile. Recall RespG’s stress on how, while he as a PM can at times be fallible, tired, distracted, but *“when you have a process coming from the culture itself and the ecosystem of the organization that you're working in that pushes you for being ethical and rewards you for being ethical. It makes things easier for you.”* RespG in particular places a weight of responsibility on the PMs themselves to find and choose their places of employment based on whether they “place ethics at the forefront” and work with the long-term “social and technological” ethical considerations in mind; and not just for short-term gains as previously described. Recall how RespB coped with his responsibilities as a supply-chain manager in his projects in two distinct ways as the environment transitioned around him three times. How he was encouraged by his supervisor to trust his “ethics within” and “to go get the best deals on the market” and how he felt that his unique skill-set was appreciated for a while under this inspired management. But then with the recent acquisition, he is forced to go “strictly by the book” and how he feels stifled, and like his job can be done by practically anyone now. Recall how RespE was pushed by the line organization (the HR department) to deceive his interns; and how he described his colleagues from the business development department as “sales-people” who often “lie and exaggerate” during the business plan stage, and how these lies and exaggerations once they find their way into the contracts and agreements will negatively affect his work during execution. Recall RespD’s description of multi-billion dollar contracting companies where not only there exists an environment of neglect when it comes to ethics, but where managers actually instruct their employees in the opposite direction, and how when the resources start becoming scarce, the employees start employing those unethical tactics on their own firms. Recall how for RespG, meeting with his colleagues from all departments that are working on the project to discuss and resolve ethical dilemmas and decide on release strategies is a major plus, as it decreases “the burden” and improves the quality of decision-making as compared to unilateral decision-making.

- The environment includes one crucial element: One's "superior; boss; manager; chief; leader" who as we saw from all respondents plays a pivotal role in the propagation of ethics in action. RespB and RespC both described chiefs whom they saw as "inspiring", "ethical" and "competent" and whom trusted their employees, delegated much authority, encouraged a high-degree of autonomy and personal responsibility and "took all the responsibility while claiming none of the credit" for the good ideas being generated by the team (as RespA had earlier described). RespE has basically modeled his entire code of ethics on both past and current managers that inspired him and whom he described as "never worked by the book" but still "ethical" and "competent".
- RespD in particular is working toward having the firm itself one day become one of the main sources that positively contribute toward his employees' personal "reservoir of ethics": through firstly simplifying the "codes of anti-corruption; anti-fraud; ethics and conduct" so that they become much "shorter", much "easier to understand", and "less theoretical; more applicable" in real scenarios. And secondly through "raising the awareness" of the employees and instilling a "sense of ethics of the real kind" the "*lived* kind", through ethical training sessions that focus on building ethics from "the bottom up"; where there are lectures by specialists on current issues, but also "cross-table discussions" where all supervisors must participate and deliberate on actual ethical scenarios that recently took place between the different stakeholders. This should be complimented by "anonymous surveys" that contain real-life "What would you do?" scenarios, and that may indicate in which departments and projects "awareness" could be lacking, to be targeted by more intensified ethical awareness programs. This, according to RespD, should hopefully result in the employees having "ethics *within*; integrity; trust-worthiness..." which would result in them truly "wanting" to act in an ethical manner when situations arise; not just simply "ticking boxes that say anti-slavery; anti-child labor...", and not acting out of "fear of punishment" or a desire to simply be "in compliance" – as the former is seen as true long-term change, and the latter is seen as a "bubble" that will sooner or later burst. And all of this can lead to the firm being known as, and deserving of the title of "trust-worthy" by both internal actors and external stakeholders, such as "suppliers, banks, lenders..." which would eventually lead to "longevity" and "long-term success" for the firm.

In short: The "environment; corporate environment; ecosystem; corporate culture" surrounding the project manager... *(And which includes experienced and respected managers who are seen as both "ethical" and "competent" by the PMs and project team. Who delegate authority, listen to their PMs and team members, and select the best ideas based on merit and without taking credit for them. Who encourage a high-degree of autonomy and instill a sense of personal responsibility within their subordinates)*... was found to have much more of an effect on the level of ethical awareness and the method of application when it comes to ethics, than any code, standard, protocol or instruction-based mechanism.

It is important to note that most PMs still viewed their "reservoir of ethics" as coming from a highly personal place: from RespD "*I had a reservoir of ethics that I learned from my home and from my temple and from my university and from my society...*" and from personal and professional experiences that had an impact on them along their personal journeys (e.g. the university experiences of RespA influencing the bribe rejection; the HR department pushing RespE to do something "technically legal but unethical" toward his project team leading to his present-day zero-tolerance policy toward abuse etc.) RespB even felt that "Ethics cannot be studied, cannot be educated, cannot be forced. Ethics should be *embraced* and *built-in*... You gain this from when you are an infant until you die." And we saw how he alongside RespC

and RespA had a negative view of the ethical training and “evaluation” protocols being pushed at their firms, as they felt that they “already had it [ethics] *within* them”. From RespC:

“I look at them and see them as normal or ‘default’ things. Maybe other people saw them as ‘Wow! These are new notions’ or started getting entangled within them or started getting scared. But for me, no nothing has changed. Because these principles, I already have them, from *the source*.”

This “*source*” that RespC is hinting at was present in all my interviews, and was, often times, difficult to describe or to put into words:

“...He thought everyone has a price. And here we go back to the topic of principles, and here you know, I was fresh out of university, and they [the university] and the company didn't give us lists or codes of ethics or anything like that. For me it just came from within me, from my upbringing, from my..[long pause] you see I acted from something that is within me, there was nothing like a standard that prevented me, you know what I mean?”

This is why I do not include these highly personal source(s), or the aforementioned personal/professional journeys as mere contributing factors to ethics as such; because, to them, It *is* their ethics, and so is more in line with the definition of ethics i.e. Q1. While the environment and the enlightened leadership can positively contribute to it. RespC summarizes beautifully:

“...When I first came to this company we didn't have all these codes or standards or stuff like that; but what really affects you is your boss, your manager. Your leader. Engineer [name redacted], I'm telling you, *I have it inside me; but also, he affected me a lot, and also affected the rest of the team...*The thing is not just about codes and standards; *it's the environment!*”

V-3 Composite Summary

The Hycner (1985) methodology views the comprehensive integration of theory as exactly the kind of reductionism that is holding back “traditional research” (ibid, p. 300). The purpose of the theoretical framework then is to find concepts and terminology that can be as faithful as possible in describing the phenomena for what they are, with the least amount of dilution of the unique human experience (ibid, p. 297). So finally, as the last step in Hycner’s approach, I shall introduce the “aggregate profile” of all seven project managers. This character aims at providing an overall summary of how the seven PMs view and interact with the actors and tools of the project management “world” as it pertains to ethics. Also here, I can introduce what researchers, authors and philosophers like Lennerfors, Bredillet, Kliem, Aristotle, Heidegger, Dreyfus, Coeckelbergh etc. might have to say about this character, and how their works can help us understand the phenomena being described. The Composite Summary will be presented in a series of 19 points (that can be thought of as overall findings) each followed by commentary derived from theory as necessary. These findings cover what the respondents mostly or overwhelmingly agreed upon; but for parts that are unique to specific respondents, explicit mention will be made (e.g. RespD’s training programs). Quotation marks in the script of the summary (not the commentary) e.g. “golden ideals” are direct quotations from the respondents.

1: The aggregate PM demonstrates a high level of awareness when discussing various topics on ethics within project management. This is most likely due to an increased sense of responsibility which is correlated with his perceived power over other “humans”; stakeholders’ lives and livelihoods, and leads to this intrinsic heightened awareness on topics related to ethics. He (*all respondents were male*) describes ethics in terms of virtues, in line with what papers like Helgado’ttir (2008), Lennerfors (2013), Ljungblom and Lennerfors (2018)... and books like Lennerfors (2019) term “virtue ethics”. And always in the spirit of “living; applying; doing” what is ethical (ethics in action) in line with what papers like Bredillet (2014) and Bredillet et al. (2014) call Aristotelian virtue ethics. This experienced PM, having worked with companies both on the owner side as well as the contractor side (see coverage of Berggren et al., 2001) has a nuanced understanding of the unique pressures and complexities which members and managers on each project team face on a daily basis.

2: This PM, due to working in international project environments or multinational firms that heavily rely on projects, and where the “standards for ethics are high”, has a tangible respect for professional codes of ethics and conduct. However, due to his decades of experience in the field during which he has been personally “dealing” with the different “actors”, “tools” and “stakeholders” of the “world”...

Recall the critical concept of “dealing” from Heidegger. Van der Hoorn and Whitty (2015) explain that it entails the “being” of those involved and is always embodied in action – rather than cognition. And it is through daily action (daily dealing with the world) that meaning is revealed. The authors continue by arguing that cognitive knowledge distilled as standard sets of definitions and rules of procedures in a body of knowledge book omits a significant amount of what is required to actually deal (find meaning) with the project phenomena. This “dealing” in lieu of active cognitive reflection was found to be a prominently used term by the PMs to describe proceedings in the execution phase in particular.

3: ...he refers to these codes as “golden ideals” that have been defined by “the millions of our time”.

Also recall this very important concept (from Being and Time, 1962) related to *dealing*, which is *DasMan* or the *They*: *They* are the source of norms and behaviors to which *Dasein* conforms. The *they* is the source of the “done thing” or “the right way of doing something” (as defined in Greaves, 2010). The *They* is described as a necessary but constraining force in project management, in that it restricts innovation and dictates expected behaviors that may not align with what is

actually required in a given situation. Kliem (2012) also argues that strict adherence to standardized codes which are imposed by the project management industry can lead to restricting the expansion of knowledge in the field.

4: These ideals are to be “respected” and “approached” but cannot realistically be followed by default, and can never really be “reached”. He internally believes that these codes are “too long; needlessly complex; unrealistic; detached from reality”.

Kleim (2012) asserted that, while important to have, a code of ethics should not replace judgment either on an individual or a group level. Bredillet, in line with Aristotelian thought, crucially notes that entering the PM practitioner community does not entail the blind acceptance of standards. Recall also the extensive coverage of Bredillet’s opposition to “arbitrary” standards, which he calls unnecessary and enforced, and simply arising from outside forces and accepted through lazy convention and are typically fixed, and contain contradictory information as they start off from the wrong end in line with rationalist schools like deontology or consequentialism. As opposed to “organic” standards that arise “from within” the community: where the observer is the practitioner. Such standards rely on the wisdom of the experienced practitioner and so are dynamically built over decades through the competent practice of virtuoso practitioners and change when someone finds a better way of doing something.

5: And so instead of blindly adhering to these codes, which he likens to dogmatic thinking...

Recall Bredillet’s deontologist and consequentialist classification of the PMI and the APM codes of ethics, respectively. And how he wants to move beyond conflicts such as those between “competing duties” and “duty vs. outcomes” by applying the Aristotelian perspective i.e. by involving the (practical) virtue/character of the PM herself. And recall how even Aristotle’s stance was still too cognitivist for Coeckelbergh who envisioned a concept called “imagination-at-work”: where morality might still require imagination; but not that of the detached Cartesian genius (theoria) but imagination-at-work during which actual deliberation is not required at all. This of course is epistemologically opposite to the Platonic; Cartesian starting point where we try to “design” a “blueprint” of the perfectly rational moral human or society. Naturally, this view presupposes a “fixed good” that can be applied or reached; and upon reaching it, we would have fixed this “messy, practical world” once and for all. Coeckelbergh’s moral creativity, like “virtue ethics” (as presented by Bredillet or Lennerfors for example) emphasizes growth; natural cultivation, in opposition to design; implementation. This is also why once we discern a solution to an ethical problem at a certain point in time and within a specific context, there is not any guarantee that next time we can use the same solution, under this lens.

6: ...he, without consciously thinking about it, is continuously “coping” with the ethical problems he is faced with...

The concept of “embodied coping” can be traced back to Dreyfus who, as previously covered, explains that the phenomenology of, and knowledge involved in, practical activity and skill acquisition is neither based on “rules” or “mental representations”, but involves a “coping” that, especially when one is an expert, is based on implicit know-how and intuition. In other words, the activity may be goal-oriented, but we do not think about the goal. And that crucially, deliberation only comes when coping is blocked. RespC and RespE emphasized that moral reflection for them only took place outside of the execution phase. Coeckelbergh critically notes (as derived from Dewey, 1922) that when we do in fact consciously deliberate on some ethical dilemma or moral issue, we do so in moments of reflection that are outside our everyday flow. “The need for moral reflection only arises in terms of crisis, when habits no longer work”, and so morality as such is very rarely a matter of detached reasoning but more of a “moral development-in-action” – it is a skill–virtue that is continuously being “developed”. Furthermore, our aggregate PM exhibits “moral maturity” which means that he has acquired an expertise that has “grown in practice”. These “moral experts”, according to Coeckelbergh, are a lot more creative and imaginative and no longer need rules or other explicit instruction due to their long experience; through embodied trial and error; through the “tacit knowledge” they have accrued.

7: ...on the basis of what he might describe as “some *Base* or *Core*; with necessary *Leeway* or *Pragmatism* on top”.

In their paper, Ljungblom and Lennerfors (2018) posed the important question of how “rules” can interact with “virtue”. And Bredillet, through Aristotle, argued that “ethical theory” does not offer a decision procedure as ethics cannot be

reduced to a system of rules; and yet that some rules remain unfringeable. So ethical theory might illuminate the “nature of virtue”; but what the virtuous agent must do in a particular occasion depends entirely on the context and surrounding circumstances in the moment. And in order to fully acquire Phronesis (practical wisdom), one must become both ethically virtuous and practically wise through the development of virtue (through habit/experience). Ethical virtue, to Bredillet, can only be said to be “fully developed” when “integrated with Phronesis”. So how do the rules play into this? Recall Dewey, Fesmire and Coeckelbergh’s imagery of the Jazz musician who draws on resources of tradition, memory and experience: how she draws from the “past tone” to discover the possibilities for future tones. Also recall Lee Vincent’s (2006) paper on how Virtue-rules (which are drawn out in a specific context in an Aristotelian process of discernment and deliberation i.e. Phronesis) and the Universalizable-rules (codes; standards; static schools based in rationalism e.g. deontology or utilitarianism) interplay: V-rules are not reducible to U-rules but U-rules are reducible to V-rules (Refer to the ending of part III). Importantly, both Bredillet and Coeckelbergh negated that we completely do away with “instruction” because we always have beginners entering every field, including project management. But when it concerns being a moral (or any other) expert, it is tacit knowledge; know-how; knowledge-in-practice that we are after.

8: In fact, this PM looks at the colleagues around him who strictly adhere to corporate policy and work “by-the-book”; yet he insists “they do not care”.

Recall the very important concepts of “caring” and “handling” from Heidegger and how Coeckelbergh, under his moral craftsmanship framework, and by way of Crawford (2009), links “caring” with “virtue”. To “take care of things” has its unique kind of knowledge, and not only contributes to good for others but also to the carer’s own virtue.

9: That they are working “strictly by-the-book” as some kind of protection mechanism so that they can be referred to, or known as “ethical” as per the corporate rulebook definition; but they do not really “care” about their work. They are found to actually be quite wasteful with company resources and incompetent and are therefore judged as “negligent; careless; unethical” by our PM’s practical standards.

Recall from Lennerfors (2013) who argues in line with Philipson (2004) that the dominant way in which ethics permeate the modern business entity is, unfortunately, that of the “minimalistic” thinker: where organization members just want to act in adherence to a code of ethics mainly with the aim of avoiding problems or scandals for the organization. To be minimalistically ethical is to live (or work) in a manner not infringing on some agreed upon or prescribed “baseline” of rules – often dictated by the firm for which you work, or the governing body of your industry. However, Ljungblom and Lennerfors (2018) shows hope in the potential rise of “dynamic” virtue ethics that takes into account the moral development of the agent unlike deontology or utilitarianism. Also, Kliem (2012) argues that fixed codes of ethics in any industry can often end up serving as an excuse to do something ironically unethical. He notes that the project management codes of ethics contain principles and terminology that are often so vague and contradictory that they can be used to justify anything, allowing professionals to make their own interpretations and provide justifications for whatever actions they wanted to take anyway.

10: For this daily “dealing with the world”, which mostly happens during the execution phase, the PM utilizes a “personal code” of ethics that is not consciously thought about: it simply “emerges from within; shines” in the specific context(s) in which it is needed. This personal code emerges from what the PM describes as his “reservoir of ethics” which stems from both personal and professional experiences and “sources” which shape his “journey; mission”, and is continuously being added to (a “process”) with more experiences being lived; ethical dilemmas being resolved; mistakes being made and reflected on etc.

Recall how the “moral experts” according to Coeckelbergh are a lot more creative and imaginative and so no longer need rules or other explicit instruction. Through their long experience; through embodied trial and error; through the “tacit knowledge” they have accrued: they can “improvise; be creative”. Also when Coeckelbergh was discussing “moral change”: how he prefers to think of it as a slow, incremental “process” that cannot be completely controlled; in opposition to “design”, “production” or “implementation”. Coeckelbergh’s “moral imagination” has nothing to do with imagining an ideal moral world with perfect principles and rules; nor is it imagining within the limits of “moral reasoning”. Rather, it is a very “practical”, “social” and “fluid” kind of imagination, a creativity that is entangled with our everyday experiences and our practices. Coeckelbergh insists that becoming a moral craftsman is more a process of “emerging” that happens during the process of actual handling, which results in “tacit knowledge” and simply cannot be

turned into a recipe. It is “knowing-how” not “knowing that”. And from Bredillet: how the “good; wise; competent” PM always exhibits Phronesis in specific project situations and contexts, while building on her knowledge of both theory and practice.

11: The PM, when asked to reflect on this “personal code”, will state that there should be some kind of “consistency” or “systemization” of one’s own ethics: so that one does not resolve an ethical issue or dilemma in one way; and then a very similar issue in a completely different way.

Recall how, to Coeckelbergh, the moral craftsman is not only competent; but crucially also creative in a unique way: the way she performs her craft is specific/unique to her (it is linked to his or her particular way of engaging with things and people). This is because her know-how is “partly shared” and “partly unique”; and the reason she is so imaginative/creative is not because she has some secret recipe, it is because she has acquired her particular reservoir of know-how through her years of experience.

12: This PM is personally and passionately invested in the competent finishing of milestones and his projects “within scope; under-budget and on-time”. He does not make a distinction between his “personal” and “professional” journeys, and the idea that a PM can be “ethical at work but not outside” is laughable to him. He truly equates his competence with his very identity; and sees ethics as a “core; integral; indivisible” part of that equation, and as the “source of his power”.

Recall how Bredillet wanted to go beyond the dualism by utilizing Aristotelian virtue ethics and getting the PM’s own “character; virtue” involved and equated with their “competence”. Recall how Coeckelbergh’s whole concept of moral creativity as moral craftsmanship is to do with actually living virtue, competence, morality... How Coeckelbergh derives (from MacIntyre, 2007’s definition of Phronesis) that good is never a pre-given; rather, it is always “emerging”, always being “developed with practice”. And that good craftsmanship is ultimately good practice: with practice involving the many goods inherent to each practice.

13: This is why the PM views any serious and deliberate infringement on his “ethics; integrity” as grave: since he would lose this sense of power, his “respect for himself” and perhaps even his sense of identity as a competent–ethical project manager. He describes these consequences as more grave than any punishment or demotion dictated by standards or corporate policy. What is more, other important end results of being ethical to this PM are things like “peace of mind; sound sleep” and the esteem in which his family holds him; therefore, he would be losing these as well.

Recall from the coverage of Aristotle, how ethics (which to Aristotle is practical knowledge rooted on experience coupled with good action; not just theoretical knowledge, or mere descriptions of virtue) is the condition for making righteous actions possible, which in turn enables the development of the right habits, which in turn enables the development of good character, which leads to achieving Eudaimonia – happiness and wellbeing as the end result.

14: The PM has an intimate, almost paternal affinity toward his project team and sees them as an extension of himself. He always picks the best ideas based on merit and encourages the team to have the confidence to act on these ideas as he “takes all of the responsibility, while claiming none of the credit”. He is wise enough to understand that his team’s competence is directly linked with his, and that treating them in an ethical manner is the way by which this link can manifest.

Recall how the authors of van der Hoorn and Whitty (2015) criticize the project management community’s obsession with codifying its practice because the majority of interactions between project participants and stakeholders are tacit, contextual and transparent. How the “traditional notion” of project management is likely failing to capture much of the tacit dealing that project teams and project managers experience. Recall also how Rolfe et al. (2016) emphasized that project managers deal with issues of meaning that mostly have human beings as external referents (not inanimate objects), which is why the natural science view has failed to encapsulate the practice. This was also stressed under the “social networks” view of project management as per Pryke (2017). By utilizing a phenomenological approach that aims

at getting at the lived experience of the PM, it is evident we are gaining valuable insight into the complexities of these relationships and interactions, as predicted by Cicmil et al. (2006).

15: And when ethical dilemmas arise during the project, the PM knows that he “does not want to and does not have to” make decisions unilaterally. He instead sees himself as “the link that connects all other links”. He knows that resolving ethical dilemmas “democratically” “decreases the burden” and “improves the quality” of the decision. He does not wait until there are dilemmas however, as he also sees himself as a “powerful observer” whose job it is not only to observe, but to continuously “push for accountability” and “raise awareness” on ethical matters. He periodically calls for “cross-functional; inter-disciplinary” meetings where matters relating to ethics and to the project in general are looked at from all angles.

Recall how Kliem (2012) and Helgado'ttir (2008) specifically highlight the team aspect of ethical behavior – that is, the project manager “reflects ethics” with her team members: in the way decisions are made among them and put into action e.g. whether an ethical decision is made democratically or unilaterally. How a healthy ethical project environment has tangible benefits to the project in the form of greater information sharing and collaboration among team members. And from part I, how Aristotle's virtuous person can only be developed as such within a community. And from part III, the “workshop of the craftsman” is always a social place. And how Coeckelbergh emphasizes that the “moral worker” always works with others; and “moral improvement” is a collaborative project; and the “moral imagination” being exhibited by the moral worker within the collaborative project must always be thought of as also being a “social imagination”. How Coeckelbergh ultimately (through Borgmann, 1984) wants to establish a clear link between morality, competence and “social engagement”. I summarized it by saying that moral imagination, skilled work and social engagement can all arise together: through belonging to a strong work community; through applying collective moral imagination where moral problems arise and demand a collaborative response in line with the “living society” with its own ongoing social and moral experiments; through after-work bonding activities etc.

16: The PM describes two types of firms within the project management world: the “long-term thinkers”; and the “short-term losers”. The former “place ethics at the forefront”: they understand that upholding contracts, performing transactions, delivering work packages, and generally doing business on the basis of “integrity; honesty; trust-worthiness” of the “lived; actual; real” kind leads to longevity in the field. This is because when external stakeholders, like “banks; lenders; firms” see you as “honest; transparent; trust-worthy”, they are much more likely to instigate and sustain business with your firm that is of the “repeat; long-term; relationship-based” kind. He knows that contracts are not sufficient in this regard as “trust” and “reputation” are still the keys to success in project management, since relationships and transactions are all-important. He also knows that ethics has a personal-success dimension as well, as when management views the PM as ethical, they will start handing him more assignments and responsibilities, leading to faster career progression as compared to those colleagues who are unethical or who employ the strictly “by-the-book” definition of ethics. In short, he says that ethics is not only good because it is “the right thing to do”, it also “adds value in a tangible and non-tangible way”. The second type of firm, who not only disregard ethics entirely, but also entice their employees to act in the opposite direction and “rob the client”; will find that no matter how big they are in the contracting business for example, when resources start drying up, their employees will start utilizing those skills against their own firm, leading to an inevitable and disgraceful exit.

Kliem (2012) wanted to destroy the misperception that ethics has no bottom-line value, arguing that it provides both “tangible” and “intangible” value. An example on the former was by providing us with a framework for making decisions – especially when we are presented with a confusing level of complexity: meaning project managers who demonstrate a high level of ethical awareness can deal with the gray areas of ethical situations (when right from wrong is unclear). An example on the latter was that a demonstrable neglect of ethical considerations can lead to very tangible negative consequences for the firm, such as disbarment from future contracts; the mounting of civil and criminal fines on both individuals within the firm, and the firms themselves. Not only that, but Kleim avers that ethics leads to tangible benefits to the firm directly in the form of greater profits, as well as tangible benefits to the project organization in the form of

greater information sharing and collaboration among team members – insisting that a neglect of ethics could lead to slipped schedules, poor quality of output, and exceeding the budget.

17: This is why this PM encourages the development and deployment of corporate ethics training programs that are of a specific type. He dislikes what he terms typical or “survey-based; franchise” ethics training and evaluation protocols, which focus on “form-filling” and “box-ticking” and “blind instruction”, as he and his like-minded colleagues view them as “unnecessary; cheesy; detached”. The kind he is after is that which tries to instill a sense of the aforementioned “real; lived; applied” ethics within the employees “from the bottom up”.

Recall how Coeckelbergh was in opposition to the “top-down” approach toward changing society: what he termed the Platonic school which is based in “theoria”, aiming to design “a blueprint” of the perfectly rational moral human. Coeckelbergh encourages us to see that this is a detached mode of knowing: knowing that goes on “in my head”; knowing of a “philosopher contemplating” – not to mention that this view presupposes a “fixed good” that can be applied or reached, and upon reaching it, we would have fixed this “messy, practical world” once and for all. Coeckelbergh stresses that adhering to a fixed moral code of sorts does not equal “morality”. That in order to creatively cope with complex things like modern technology risks, environmental degradation, financial crises... we need to, at the very least, consider the unspoken elements of the very human emotions; intuition or wisdom. The bottom-up approach has more to do with “living” virtue, competence, morality... in both a “social” and “pragmatic” sense. Coeckelbergh’s moral creativity as craftsmanship aims to replace the detached “rational” moral subject; “ivory tower” moral science and the “Cartesian-style” empathy with something akin to the development and use of “moral skill” that allows one to cope with the on-the-ground moral problems which one and others are involved in, within their respective contexts. The training/evaluation programs disliked by RespA;B;C I report fall under the former. While the ones being pushed by RespD aim to bridge the gap: it is still top-down design but it focuses on encouraging the growth of “real; lived; applied” ethics from the bottom up. See point 19 for more details.

18: And he adds that these training programs should be coupled with a “simplification” of the codes of ethics; “anti-corruption; anti-fraud” and such so that they become comprehensible to everyone, and actually applicable in real life.

Recall Bredillet’s coveted dynamically-defined standards which arise with good practices that are established by “virtuoso practitioners” as recognized by the community of practitioners; and change dynamically through collective dialogue and deliberation. These coveted standards are the ones which are observed from within the practice and are impossible to be observed just from outside, by perception. That is, the observer is the practitioner, the native, dealing with things and theorizing his/her own practice leading to no dichotomy between practice and theory. And how this lead Bredillet to call for shorter standards which focus on “values” rather than means, facts, regulations, violations, sanctions and prohibitions; standards that are “inspirational” in nature, and more in line with “the ends”. Also recall how he provided the Advertising Federation of Australia Agency Code of Ethics as an excellent example of this – asserting that we would not even have to change that much in order for it to be immediately applicable to project management.

19: These training programs, at their core, are after gauging and raising the “ethical awareness” of the employees, and instilling “integrity; honesty; trust-worthiness” that are of the “real; lived” kind. In a way that, when faced with a bribe for example, the employee truly “wants to say no”. The employee is not “just ticking a box that says they are anti-corruption...”, or is scared of punishment or simply wants to be in compliance. The one is seen by the PM as the “long-term” thinker’s way; while the other as a “bubble” that will sooner or later burst. The PM suggests bi-annual conferences on ethics where an ethics specialist gives a lecture on the latest on ethics in business; the project management realm; as well as academia. Followed by “cross-table” discussions where employees – especially supervisors, foremen and managers are requested to attend and participate. During these meetings, everyone is encouraged to discuss and reflect upon “real-life” ethical experiences that they lived through and that involve other stakeholders both internal and external, and how they dealt with these ethical situations, and how they affected them.

These events are then complimented by anonymous surveys which focus on “real-life what-would-you-do scenarios” that aim at gauging the “level of awareness” in different projects and departments.

Recall Ljungblom and Lennerfors (2018)’s argument that, when it comes to corporate ethical training programs, we should use virtue ethics that are practiced in real situations at the very least as a complement to the understanding of the codes of ethics. Because the processual construction of a virtuous project management cannot be accomplished through a code of conduct. And that so we can support such a process, project managers can occasionally hold meetings which focus on how they are practicing ethics and how ethics are perceived in the real word. Virtuous and experienced project managers can be invited to these discussions to provide insights that stem from reality – in order to at least complement the rule-following, almost legalistic ethics in project management. It is evident that the programs described by RespD incorporate many of these elements. From RespD’s description it can be deduced that his strategy aims to transform the ethical training programs from the realm of “instruction” to the “real; emerging; implicit; actual; lived”. The apprentice moralist, according to Coeckelbergh, does require explicit instruction e.g. how a beginner cook needs recipes and instructions; conversely, becoming an expert moral craftsman is more of an “emerging” that happens during the process of actual handling, which is what these training programs aim to emulate.

VI. Conclusion

This paper set out with two research aims that can be boiled down into these four concluding parts:

Summary of the field

As the Theory section unfolded, we saw how authors from different backgrounds define “ethics” in many ways, but a few common themes prevail. Ethics at its core is about discernment: that is judging that a moral issue or dilemma is just that; and then deliberation on how to solve that issue or dilemma in the “best” way. We learned that rationalist thinkers like utilitarians or consequentialists tend to believe that it is possible to design a formula that can generate the “best” solutions all the time. A utilitarian, who believes that one must always strive to maximize well-being or minimize harm to the greatest number of sentient beings, if presented with a scenario where either ten senior citizens or nine babies can be saved would ostensibly choose to save the senior citizens based on this pre-set moral blueprint. This kind of implementation mentality of a set moral code is what Bredillet has in mind when discussing the “non-organic; arbitrary; imposed” standards in the project management industry; what Coeckelbergh’s Platonic “moral super-agent” utilizes while presupposing a fixed good that can be reached once and for all when designing his moral blueprint; what Vincent (2016) calls to act in accordance with “universalizable-rules”. The main issues with this mentality is that it reduces the moral agent to an automaton that can only follow rules; and that it has little to do with actual morality, as Kliem (2012) stated: fixed codes of ethics in any industry can often end up serving as an excuse to do something ironically unethical. He notes that the project management codes of ethics contain principles and terminology that are often so vague and contradictory that they can be used to justify anything, allowing professionals to make their own interpretations and provide justifications for whatever actions they wanted to take anyway.

That type of ethics was presented in opposition to an alternative way of looking at, and solving moral dilemmas. Vincent (2016) describes “virtue-rules” which arise from the moral agent after the aforementioned process of “discernment” then “deliberation” in the specific context of the situation. We saw how this Aristotelian decision-making process when put into action i.e. when the moral agent actually practices this kind of wisdom, not just reads about it, he/she can be said to have exhibited “Phronesis” (practical wisdom), which is both an ethical and an intellectual virtue. Bredillet wanted to integrate these virtue ethics i.e. the “character” of the project manager, which arises through the development of the “right habits” and leads to “Eudaimonia” (happiness; well-being), into the competence model of what it means to be a project manager. This means that wise actions taken during the specific situations that arise during the project lifecycle; not based on fixed codes or protocols or evaluation metrics become the way competence is decided. This however would necessitate that the project management community start thinking in this way as Phronesis is always applied within and judged by the community (polis).

In part III, this was taken a step further by re-thinking the deliberation half of the Aristotelian process. Coeckelbergh by way of Dreyfus champions the anti-cognitivist stance toward a view of morality: by viewing virtue as being built on good habit, which is always built on “skill”, which to Dreyfus is always embodied; physical; material (always contextual), we arrive at a view of virtue that is akin to virtue-as-skilled-engagement or virtue-as-performance. This type of virtue relies on “know-how” not “knowing-that”, as in, it is about knowing how to live a good life through the development of practical skill and good habits. This involves “tacit knowledge” gained through a personal journey of experiences and practice. Morality under this view might still require imagination, but it is “imagination-at-work”, not the

imagination of the detached Cartesian genius, so conscious deliberation (outside our everyday flow) may not be required at all. Coeckelbergh re-emphasizes that by carefully studying Aristotle's definition of virtue, we see that "good" is never pre-given: rather it is always emerging; growing; being cultivated in different directions as the societal, technical and moral landscapes around us change. Coeckelbergh's good moral craftsmanship is equated with good practice – with practice involving goods that are internal to each practice (similar to how Bredillet wants to involve the project management practitioner community in linking virtue with competence). Coeckelbergh not only wants to build the link between virtue and competence, but also wants to involve social engagement. While the moral craftsman deals with moral situations in their own unique way due to the particular know-how they have acquired on their journey, their know-how is partly-unique and partly-shared. This is because craftsmanship is a deeply social activity, and the collaboration and learning that take place within the workspace are social. So the knowledge that results is highly unique to each individual, but that could have only developed through working with the specific people and tools of their respective workspace. Through belonging to a strong work community; through applying collective moral imagination where moral problems arise and demand a collaborative response relative to the ever-changing society of which we are a part, skilled work, moral imagination and social engagement all arise together.

During the coverage of the two splits (in short: rule-following vs. virtue ethics), a number of potential solutions presented themselves. I covered Vincent (2016)'s proposed solution to the schism: that Virtue-rules cannot be reduced to Universalizable-rules; but Universalizable-rules can be reduced to Virtue-rules. In short, you can as an expert, exhibit moral creativity; Phronesis emerging out of your unique reservoir of tacit knowledge (shaped by your journey of very personal experiences and training) when "coping; dealing" with a specific moral dilemma arising within a specific context within a specific community at a specific time..., while still being in observance of the U-rules that govern your society or workplace at that time. And within this embodied coping, we can slowly cultivate our U-rules in different directions, as our "default" V-rule compass dynamically guides us through time. Coeckelbergh, while building on Dreyfus' anti-instructionist stance, still conceded that instruction (in the form of codes and standards) is valuable for beginners entering every field (this includes project management). But for the moral experts, they can be creative: their skill is described in terms of "moral tinkering; moral dancing", and builds on what has been established by virtuoso practitioners in the past to create new moral possibilities. From the interviews, we saw how the respondents described having a "base; core" (in the form of golden standards) but with necessary "leeway; pragmatism; wisdom; room for creativity..." always on top and by default.

Epistemology and Methodology

The paper adopts an American phenomenological approach (as termed by Caelli, 2000) and utilizes the Hycner (1985) fifteen-step analysis methodology, in order to study the lived experience of seven highly-experienced project managers working in different industries and environments. In Main Theory part II, we saw how a shift from positivism; being; the natural sciences view toward interpretivism; becoming; lived experience focus, is not only valuable but increasingly becoming essential. To summarize, authors like Rolfe et al. (2016), van der Hoorn and Whitty (2015) argue that the rising rates of failure in project completion (to-scope, on budget, and on time) are not due to mere deviation from good practice, but are symptoms of internal contradiction within the practice itself. And only by analyzing project management from a drastically different perspective e.g. by utilizing existentialist philosophy in order to focus on the lived experience can we come to a holistic understanding of the complexities of the practice, and what is causing its failure. Project management, continue such authors, has mostly human beings as the external referents rather than inanimate objects. Therefore, disinterested objectivity is rendered insufficient:

because positivism can allow us to study the objects of experience, but not the experience itself. Authors like Coeckelbergh, Cicmil, Bredillet and Lennerfors re-affirm this idea of needing to study the practice from within. However, despite phenomenology and lived experience being discussed in many previous papers, a purely phenomenological study on project management practitioners had not been done, which is the main reason for the existence of this paper.

The phenomenological approach with the chosen methodology has proven what papers like Cicmil (2006); Cicmil et al. (2006); Cicmil and Hodgson (2006b); Ljungblom and Lennerfors (2018); van der Hoorn and Whitty (2015); Rolfe et al. (2016) etc. had theorized. Both initially, when it came to the gauging of interest and awareness of the respondents on the topic of ethics; and when gathering and analyzing the data, the methodology was helpful and produced valuable results. Having two to four in-depth interviews (varying in length between 35 minutes and two hours), coupled with the ethical safeguards in place (covered in the last section) allowed the respondents the time and the peace of mind to gain familiarity with the researcher, and to open up and formulate their experiences in a way that they felt comfortable with. The insights gained into their worlds and experiences could not have been done with a positivistic approach; especially on a topic so complex and sensitive as applied ethics. And especially since the stories and dilemmas they described were of a highly personal nature, and naturally always involved internal and external stakeholders within their respective project environments.

Findings

All of the respondents described “ethics” under two definitions: what they termed “theoretical; survey-based; a box to be ticked...” ethics and “*real; lived; actual; applied; within*” ethics. There were interesting ways that these two definitions interplayed in each of the respondents’ worlds e.g. one respondent saw the former as a golden ideal that should be approached but can never be reached; while the latter was the default method of applying ethics and the way by which one calibrates one’s compass in pursuit of that golden ideal. All of the respondents described ethics in terms of “doing; action” or in terms of virtues that are “in action”. The respondents overwhelmingly tied the second type of ethics with actually “caring” or being passionate about one’s work – standing in opposition to dogmatic rule-following while actually being incompetent. The respondents had a tendency to unify their personal and professional journeys averring that ethics are indivisible; and that one cannot be an ethical PM while being unethical outside. All of the PMs linked their ethics with the successful completion of milestones or projects: These two points led most PMs to speak of their ethics, identity and competence in a highly interchangeable manner, as if they are all almost the same thing. The two that did not still saw project management as very similar to life itself: dynamic; relationship-based; never binary and so neither could ever have a guide-book. Ethics was also described as the solver of the “gray area” issues where the laws and regulations were deemed fallible, silent or insufficient. Industry codes or standards of ethics (e.g. from PMI) were described by every single respondent as either having never been in use, or as having fallen into disuse. The respondents instead described a sort of “reservoir of ethics” that is built through real-life personal and professional experiences, and that stems from many sources (examples provided: home; temple; university; the firm itself; poverty etc.) This reservoir of ethics “becomes active; arises from within; shines...” in the specific context of an ethical dilemma. This led all respondents to side with Split II (as described in this paper) or to design a marriage between Split I and Split II: in the form of having a “base; core” of ethics represented by codes and standards; with necessary “leeway; pragmatism; wisdom; room for creativity and contingency...” on top as the default way of coping/dealing with ethical dilemmas which they face daily. “Dealing with the world” was overwhelmingly described as occurring during the execution phase of the project. This led to a split between respondents who felt that, due to the

project changing from “on paper to reality”, this stage is where ethics becomes most important or most applicable (most respondents felt this). While two of the respondents reported that thinking about ethical dilemmas does not occur at all during this stage, and so ethical dilemmas that require conscious deliberation take center stage only during pre- and post-execution phases.

Having “*applied; real; within*” ethics was described as being crucial by every single respondent. Some saw it as being at the core, or even the source of their identity and power; while others saw it as critical for business. This is because project management was described by every one of the respondents as highly relational. Clockwork where for every gear to function, there are hundreds of others; for every successful execution by the project team, there is a diligent contractor and so on. Respondents working for contractors were especially aware of this as projects were their main source of income, as opposed to the owners whose projects were part of a larger business model. Transactions were described as mainly taking place during pre-execution phases (e.g. business development; pricing; planning). Many respondents reported that during those phases, the PM must establish cordial relations which are based on “trust; honesty; transparency...” with the external stakeholders, because gaining a reputation for being trust-worthy is the main way by which the firm gets “long-term; repeat; relationship-based” business. The governing contracts were seen as insufficient, and trust was still majorly important for these PMs in choosing who they work with (or being chosen). The PMs described two types of firms: the long-term thinkers who put ethics at the forefront knowing that it will pay in the long-run; and the short-term losers who, not only neglect ethics, but instruct their employees in the opposite direction (e.g. to “rob the client”). The latter was mainly targeted toward contractors in the business: who could be operating in the billions, and then “disappear overnight” due to lack of ethics. Ultimately, being ethical, “*living ethics*” or “having ethics *within*” culminated to the respondents in one of two ways: Personally, in “peace of mind; sound sleep; respect in the eyes of their sons and daughters”. And professionally, in the successful and competent completion of milestones and entire projects with quality, under-budget and on-time.

All of the respondents described the “environment; corporate culture; ecosystem...” surrounding the project manager, and which crucially includes the PM’s “manager; leader; chief” as being one of the most important factors that affect the propagation and application of ethics in project management. It dictates, both directly and indirectly, what is behaviorally permissible and what is not. The vast majority of respondents described leaders who were “inspiring; ethical; competent”, and who the PMs strive to emulate, and at times model their entire personal codes after. Sweeping descriptions of these leaders were: always trusting their subordinates’ judgment; delegating much authority; never working by the book but still seen as ethical and competent; taking all of the responsibility for the implementation of the best ideas while claiming none of the credit; arriving at decisions democratically. This “environment” which includes this type of pragmatic and enlightened leadership was found to have an overwhelming effect on the propagation and application of ethics, much more than any codes, standards or instruction.

Immediately Applicable to the Industry

After discussing this at length with the respondents, the standards and codes of ethics presented by the industry were overwhelmingly described as: “detached from reality; inapplicable; theory”. One respondent working in a senior position within a project-dependent firm specifically described them as needlessly complex and lengthy, and was working on simplifying and shortening the codes of “anti-corruption; anti-fraud...” at his firm. The reason he gave was that he wanted the employees to actually “live these ethics”: to embody and believe in them. Not to simply sign a statement or “tick a box” at the end of the year that says “I am anti-corruption; I am anti child slavery...” while pretending to be ethical

out of fear of punishment or to simply be in compliance. He wants the employee to actually “want to say no” if offered a bribe. This is definitely in agreement with Bredillet (2014)’s call for dynamic standards which emerge from within the industry/organization: standards that are short and inspirational in nature, such as the Advertising Federation of Australia code of ethics. This indicates that shorter standards of ethics that are easier to comprehend, and which leave much needed agency to the reader’s own ethics to emerge in tandem with them can be explored by project organizations. The respondent described this state of affairs without ever reading any of Bredillet’s work.

That same respondent (RespD) also talked extensively about the training programs he is pushing at his firm without prior probing from researcher. Three respondents had earlier spoken about training and ethics evaluation programs being pushed at their firms. Those respondents felt that those programs were cheesy, unnecessary and detached. They felt that they did not need bland instruction because they felt they already had “ethics within”, and that “ethics cannot be taught”. The training programs RespD was advocating for however were different: his training programs want to instill ethics from bottom up. They focus on evaluation with intent to raise the level of awareness that the employee has toward ethical dilemmas they might face in their daily project work. They incorporate the important elements of “feedback” and “the human touch”. The way they work is by combining bi-annual lectures from experts on ethics, with cross-table discussions which focus on discussing and understanding real-life situations that involve internal and external stakeholders. These discussions are mandatory for project managers, foremen and basically anyone in a position of power. After these bi-annual meetings, anonymous forms are distributed which contain what-would-you-do scenarios which involve stakeholders (e.g. suppliers; subcontractors etc.) and which happened in real life, with the aim of gauging the level of ethical awareness in project managers and staff. The ultimate aim of these training programs is to instill a sense of ethics; “integrity; trust-worthiness; honesty” in the staff of the “real; lived” kind, and from the bottom up, which according to RespD will be felt in the bottom-line once external stakeholders like “banks; lenders; suppliers” view you as “ethical; honest; trust-worthy”. Ljungblom and Lennerfors (2018) had presented the idea of, at the very least, coupling codes of ethics with such on-the-ground; realistic training programs. The authors proposed that experienced project managers join in cross-table discussions with other project managers and discuss real-life experiences relating to ethics. This leads me to believe that, coupled with the aforementioned shorter and more simplified codes, such reality-based training programs can at the very least be put to the test by project-reliant firms or by future researchers, as they could both prove of value to the industry moving forward.

VII. Reflections on Methodology and Ethical Considerations

VII-1 General Note

I believe that the chosen methodology, when it came to the gauging of interest and awareness of the respondents as it pertains to these highly relevant and sensitive topics, as well as the actual exploration of theory as it applies onto the real world of the respondents was a great boon to the study. I believe that having two to four in-depth interviews (varying in length between 35 minutes and two hours) allowed the respondents the time to gain familiarity with me the researcher, and helped them to open up and formulate their experiences in a way that they felt comfortable with. This is partly because they always knew that they could, at any time, correct the record: since from day one, I explained to them that I would always contact them to confirm whether I had arrived at the essence of everything they had said prior to including it in the Analysis. This was also coupled with the promise that I would send them everything in written form with each masterdraft of the Analysis section. And also thanks in a huge part to the promise of anonymity that was given to the respondents prior to any data collection, which gave them the confidence to talk about some of the most impactful and sensitive ethical dilemmas and situations that affected them during their journeys without fear or worry on how it might negatively affect their careers or current position. Of course, not everyone opened up with actual scenarios (I am particularly referring to RespB) but he, and others who may have been a bit cagey in the beginning, did use other methods: such as provide me with general descriptions of events, or even parables or stories from popular culture that are meant as direct parallels to the situations they have to deal with on a daily basis (RespA was a particular fan of this method). I did not include a satisfaction gauge as it pertains to the methodology in my interviews, but three of the respondents referred to the repeated interviews, anonymous data collection and the diligent double-checking of information in a positive light; using words like “methodical; excellent; thorough; trust-worthy”. With one other respondent telling me that “It feels like a casual chat...so you can really open up.” In all, I believe that future qualitative research on the project management practitioner, whether be it on ethics, or day-to-day activities and routines can utilize this method to great effect. I provide detailed coverage in both the Theory and Methodology sections as to, not only why I chose this method with my own goals in mind; but also why aiming to arrive at the lived experience of the project manager as such can be so valuable for project management study and practice moving forward.

VII-2 Quality Considerations

I will start by listing the traditional criteria (by way of Lincoln and Guba, 1985 and Guba and Lincoln, 1994) for assessing a qualitative study:

Credibility

Due to the much discussed back-and-forth nature of the conversations I had with all respondents (a minimum of two times, and a maximum of four), I would rate the closeness to the actual account of the respondents to be particularly high in this study. Respondent validation via the confirmation interview; sending the masterdrafts of the Analysis section for approval; asking the respondents for explicit permission to include sensitive stories, was high and therefore a great boon for this metric. Furthermore, I would argue (in line with Hycner, 1985) that this particular method’s emphasis on unspoken language and non-verbal experience e.g. the feelings that overcame the managers in certain situations; what they chose to place the stress on while speaking etc. drives us closer to the original experience (even closer than

language itself at times). And lastly, while it is true that the passage of time element may inevitably lead to a distortion through recollection: it can also allow for a much richer description – precisely *because* the respondent has had time to reflect back and integrate it consciously and verbally, especially with this repeating meetings format. In all, if we have to rely on retrospective description, this is as close as it gets (also argued by Hycner, 1985, p. 296), keeping the ethical considerations in mind.

Transferability

While technically true of any qualitative study that the results, strictly-speaking, apply to the particular participants in that study, I would argue (in line with Hycner, 1985's emphasis) that the illumination of the "worlds" of the participants is in itself valuable. In fact, in agreement with Hycner, I would go so far as to say that when it comes to this type of phenomenological study, investigating just one unique individual's experiences can tell us a lot about the phenomenology of the human being (in our case, the project manager) in general. I also believe that the extensive coverage of the meta in the Theory section, as well as the rich contextual data within the interviews themselves, provide a kind of thick description on the world of project management. But Transferability, as argued by Guba and Lincoln themselves, will always remain subjective: since other researchers will have to make judgments about the possibility of transferability for their own purposes and needs.

Dependability

For this study, the aforementioned strictly anonymous data gathering, which will be presented as a strength in the Ethical Considerations section, acts as a double-edged sword here to an extent. This is because the respondents trusted me with personal and sensitive details and stories regarding their work (as it pertains to their application of ethics in certain situations). During the composition of this paper, some samples of the transcripts were shared with other researchers for the purposes of Dependability – but in those samples all personal information: from names, to country names, to firm names, and to some particularly compromising details (such as exact amounts offered in bribes; contexts in which the respondents felt particularly vulnerable privacy-wise) etc. were redacted. However, the samples I shared with the researchers, as well as the final quotes that are presented in the finalized Analysis still contain a great amount of detail, and what I would argue is just the right amount of information needed to build contexts and make arguments.

Confirmability

To this particular end, I made sure that prior to the interview (both before starting with the questions, and in the invitation itself) the respondents understood that there were no "right" or "wrong" answers. That there were no "good" or "bad" schools of thoughts; philosophies to follow etc. That they would not be judged based on how they personally perceived ethics or chose to deal with ethical dilemmas: that in fact that was the whole point, to see how things are in the real world. Furthermore, during Q3, I also made sure that the respondents understood that it does not have to be "this" or "that": that if they felt their compass is "somewhere in the middle" or "outside the two", that is a perfectly valid answer. However, since the study's first aim was to provide a summary of the field of ethics within project management where many ideas that can fall under the label of "alternative" were presented in a positive light compared to the "conventional"; and with the study utilizing what can be described as a deductive approach when it comes to analysis, it is understandable why Confirmability can fall into question. However, as Confirmability is quite tied with not being subjective, or being objective: to authors like Sardello (1971)

and Hycner (1985), “objectivity” in the context of this study has a different meaning than the natural sciences viewpoint. In the context of phenomenology: it is to be as comprehensive as possible in responding to the whole phenomena while utilizing methods that are as “faithful” as possible to that end. Most importantly, I add (in line with Hycner) that phenomenology in particular views blind adherence to theory, or a “comprehensive integration” of theory as exactly the kind of reductionism that is holding back traditional research. Therefore I was not after confirming or denying Bredillet’s propositions or Coeckelbergh’s ideas. It is simply that I found in those thinkers the most apt way of describing the phenomenon for what it is, with the least amount of dilution of the unique human experience as such.

Authenticity

For the first research aim: the summary and presentation of all thinkers, ideas and concepts were done for the benefit of future researchers and to the coming of a better understanding of ethics and project management in general, and of ethics within project management in particular. And for the second aim: I purposefully included as much coverage of the respondents’ exact expressions as permissible so that future researchers in this field may arrive at their own ideas, as well as build upon or refute my conclusions.

VII-3 Ethical Considerations

Below you will find the traditional breakdown of Ethical Considerations as presented by Bryman and Bell (2007, pp. 114-123)

Avoidance of Harm and Informed Consent

I mention these two together as, for my intents and purposes, they are intertwined. From the very first invitation that was sent to each respondent as well as before the start of each interview, I made sure that the respondents understood that no personal data that can be used to identify them will be included in this study, and that stories with unique details which can be traced back to the respondents will need their explicit approval prior to publishing. This was coupled with the “confirmation interviews” where I talked with the respondents about the key details in their respective parts; and with sending them the written masterdrafts of their respective parts in the Analysis, providing them the chance to change anything upon their request. This did mean that I lost a few stories (three in total) due to the respondents being uncomfortable with publishing them, but it also meant that I ensured that they were always comfortable with the amount of data that is being shared on their part. The altruistic reason for this is that I did not want any harm to befall any respondent due to over-sharing, or the breaking of a NDA (which were prevalent) in the form of employment termination etc. And the “selfish” reason is obviously that the respondents are much more likely to share their insights and stories if they know that their data is in safe hands; and that they can correct the record at any point.

Invasion of Privacy

The respondents, in the invitation and before the interview, were informed that I am working closely with one professor in the faculty at Uppsala University; but that *only I* had access to the full transcripts and recordings. This means that prior to sharing the transcript samples as part of the analysis methodology with this researcher, and with other researchers, I was conscious to remove all personal information. The

recordings were not shared with anyone and will be deleted after publishing (as promised to two particular respondents).

Potential Conflicts of Interest

The researcher reports no conflicts of interest.

VII-4 Ideas for Future Research

I isolate RespD's unique depiction of the corporate ethics training programs being pushed at his firm, and their efficacy in the raising of "awareness" for the purposes of instilling "ethics; virtue" of the "lived" kind "from the bottom up" as a prospective idea for future research. Ljungblom and Lennerfors (2018) proposed a shift toward such programs. This can perhaps be linked with RespA and Kliem's emphasis that ethics can add tangible and non-tangible value to the project. Perhaps a longitudinal research design with a case study format (on RespD's firm, or some other project firm with a similar idea) could be considered. Such a study does not have to be phenomenological or even qualitative. It can rely on quantitative metrics for the measurement of some criteria representing "value" and/or "awareness", before and after the implementation of the programs.

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Appendix

Below is a sample table which contains one unit of meaning from each respondent. This basic example aims to elucidate how the units of meanings can be bundled under “essences”, which then led to the identification of overarching themes further on during the analysis. RespA had the highest number of units of meaning: 75. RespB had the lowest number of units of meaning: 30. Only the units of meaning relevant to the RQ should be considered by the researcher, so a relatively shorter conversation with more relevant content could generate more units of meaning than an unfocused longer conversation. That being said my conversation with RespA was the longest in duration, and the respondent was focused on the topic at hand which explains why he generated the highest number of units of meaning.

The essences *italicized* here represent an example of a process of identification of an overarching theme. These units of meaning when aggregated with each other are pointing toward some marriage between the two philosophies or toward leaning to the second philosophy (refer to table I on page 37 for a summary of split I vs. split II). In RespA’s case he is describing his distinct sequential proposition (MARRIAGE_SEQ). “!” points to a potential contradiction in what the respondent is saying compared to other things he had said. “1+” indicates that RespA is describing split I ethics in a positive light (and in another unit of meaning this is made more definitive as he describes standards and codes as “golden ideals”). The “1-” is added because he ultimately sees them as unachievable. RespC, RespE, RespF and RespG are obviously standing in opposition to split I ethics (codes; standards). Here for example, RespG is drawing parallels to religious; dogmatic thinking.

Table II: *Sample table for analysis methodology*

Respondent	Unit of meaning	Essence
RespA	So when we hear oh this is theory it has a negative connotation; but for me it is an art, that, is some are good at it, like politics. While others put words behind each other without having any meaning so this is not theory this is [expletive]. So it is not THIS or THAT: let us agree that those ethics that were written by this school or that school and have been adopted; by doing that, we have agreed on what to achieve. But implicitly, we are all agreeing inside, that we CANNOT achieve it, but we have to APPROACH it. So this is a non-written deal...THE REAL ETHICS is HOW to ACHIEVE the WHAT	THEO_1+ MARRIAGE MARRIAGE_SEQ !_OBJSUB END DYN ENDMEANS 1- _nonachievable REALETHICS

RespB	This is why, I, from my perspective I WOULD fulfill and follow the second approach. THIS IS FROM EXPERIENCE, In some cases you need to have the second philosophy, nevertheless, there will be time you need to fulfill the first philosophy, so I prefer hybrid: both of them, maybe 70% for the second one and 30% for the above and this is MY understanding and MY perspective	2+ MARRIAGE SUB PERCODE
RespC	I act according to the APPLIED situation that is in front of me. I already have it, and I have always been like this all my life. This is just from my view point	2+ REALETHICS JOURNEY SUB PERCODE DYN
RespD	To be honest with you, there isn't a strict line between the two schools you described. You are always, the human always works with both approaches in his application of ethics.	MARRIAGE DYN
RespE	At the end of the day, not just in project management, in all of our lives, we do not live our lives by the book. Life is dynamic, it is. It does not have... there is not a book that you can refer to and open it and say oh this is the solution to my problem in clause no. blah. Our lives are not contracts between corporations, especially daily life. So I will say oh I will refer to the PMI code, what does it say? I will refer to this school of ethics, what do they say? I will refer to the contractors' code, what does it say? NO.	1-2+ 2_HUMAN RLT DYN PERCODE
RespF	I mean like I am with the second school of thought. There are situations, like, the code doesn't cover it. You get these situations sometimes, you have to act from your head, you have to calculate in the moment, what is the situation. And	2+ 1- 2_WITHIN_CONTEXT PERCODE JOURNEY ENVTRANSITION DYN

	when I was in [redacted] I dealt with situations differently than I deal with them here.	
RespG	It's not school one it's not school one. I wouldn't go for what would you know, you know a Muslim person do in this case or what would Jesus do like like you see in here, right? It's it's I think it's embedded you should look at it as you set up the tone for your ethics as part of the mission either for the corporate or the mission for yourself, right so you say it's like this is this is my mission	1- 1_DOGMA 2+ 2_WITHIN JOURNEY JOURNEY_MISSION PERCODE DYN