# Virtue Ethics AC

“The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them.”

~ Ernest Hemingway

Morality is expressed in attributive adjectives. Good and bad can’t be read as independent information asserted about something separate from the form. The goodness of an object is contingent on its function. A good watch is only good if it fulfills its function of telling time. Normativity is just a search for a “good.” Similarly, we base ethics on considerations of the human nature. Once an agent recognizes the good, they are obligated to act for that end.

#### Foot[[1]](#footnote-1)

Anscombe writes, ‘getting one another to do things without the application of physical force is a necessity for human life, and that far beyond what could be secured by… other means.’ Anscombe is point here to what she has elsewhere called “an Aristotelian necessity’: that which is necessary because and in so far as good hangs on it. We invoke the same idea when we say that it is necessary for plants to have water, for birds to build nests, [and] for wolves to hunt in packs, and for lionesses to teach their cubs to kill. These ‘Aristotelian necessities’ depend on what the particular species of plants and animals need, on their natural habitat, and the ways of making out that there are in their repertoire. These things together [and] determine what it is for members of a particular species to be as they should be, and to do that which they should do. And for all the enormous differences between life and humans and that of plans and animals, we see that human defects and excellences are similarly related to what human beings are and what they do. We do not need to be able to dive like gannets, nor to see in the dark like owls; but our memory and concentration must be such as to allow us to learn language, and our sight such that we can recognize faces at a glance; while, like lionesses, human parents are defective if they do not teach their young the skills that they need to survive.

Our concept of a human requires what is both constitutive of a *good human* and what’s *good for* humans. This twin aspect of the good is only fulfilled by virtues.

#### Hursthouse[[2]](#footnote-2)

To possess the virtues is, as we have seen in previous chapters, not only to be well disposed with respect to actions from reason but also with respect to emotions and desires. Notwithstanding the enormous importance of our actions from reason, our emotions are also morally significant, and being well disposed with respect to them involves being well disposed with respect to the occasional impulsive actions from inclination, and the emotional reactions which are not merely physical, to which they give rise.[22](javascript:%20changeFootnote(footnotes[2].lookup,footnotes[2].expanded);) Virtuous action also involves ‘reactions which are not merely physical’ in the form of perceptions of what is relevant in a situation, which, as we saw in the first three chapters, is indispensable. Hence the concept of a virtue emerges as apparently tailor-made to encapsulate a favorable evaluation of just those aspects, which, according to the naturalism here outlined, are the ethically relevant ones. To be a good human being is to be well endowed with respect to the aspects listed; to possess the human virtues is to be thus well endowed. The human virtues make their possessor good qua human being[s], one who is as ordinarily well fitted as a human being can be in not merely physical respects to live well, to flourish—in a characteristically human way. It is not plausible to say that, for example, courage plays much the same sort of role in human life as its analogue does in that of, say, wolves? Good wolves defend themselves and their cubs and each other, and risk life and limb as the pack attacks the prey, thereby fostering their individual survival, and continuance of the species, and the particular way the members of the social group cooperate in order to secure food for the group and protect themselves from danger. Human beings who are good in so far as they are courageous defend themselves, and their young, and each other, and risk life and limb to defend and preserve worthwhile things in and about their group, thereby fostering their individual survival, the continuance of the species, their own and others’ enjoyment of various good things, and the good functioning of the social group. I have read that, amongst the social animals, both wolves and elephants have patterns of action that resemble our charitable or benevolent acts, and again it seems plausible to say that the patterns play similar roles in the different forms of life. Charity directed to the young and helpless particularly serves the continuance of the species; directed more widely it serves the good functioning of the social group by fostering the individual survival, freedom from pain, and enjoyment of its members, and also by fostering its cohesion. (Charity, unlike courage, does not serve the end of individual survival directly, but, like worker bees’ stings, indirectly. An individual worker bee’s functioning sting, unlike a wolf’s sharp teeth, is not a good part because it fosters its individual survival; when a worker bee uses its sting it promptly dies. But given that bees have stings, predators learn to avoid bees because they sting, and that fosters the survival of individual bees. Charity does not, by and large, foster the individual survival of its possessor (though, as we saw, it may do), but given that members of a social group living together have charity, they can often live longer, avoid some suffering, enjoy more, because someone else helps them.) And other virtues which perhaps have no analogue amongst the other animals still serve some of the four ends (without being inimical to the others). Without honesty, generosity, and loyalty we would miss out on one of the greatest sources of characteristic enjoyment, namely lovely relationships; without honesty we would be unable to cooperate or to acquire knowledge and pass it on to the next generation to build on. And it has long been a commonplace that justice and fidelity to promises enable us to function as a social, cooperating group. All this seems to me not only plausible but also not entirely unfamiliar. It is not so far removed from Hume’s claim that the virtues are those characteristics that are useful and/or agreeable to their possessor and/or to others, nor from modern attempts to evaluate actions or principles of action as right in the light of their tendency to promote the greatest happiness and freedom from suffering or as necessary for our living together in a society. True, modern discussions, being mostly by non-virtue ethicists, tend to emphasize right action rather than the virtue of good human beings, but most will readily accept that good human beings are those who have the virtues and that the virtues are those character traits that tend to produce what they identify as right actions. And although the ends of individual survival and the continuance of the species do not look as familiar as the other two, I think one can usually discern their influence too. Accounts that turn out to require widespread self-sacrifice or the fatal turning of the other cheek are criticized on the score and usually amended accordingly so that good human beings—the ones who tend to produce right actions—have a reasonable expectation of individual survival. The continuance of the species is a much trickier issue as far as reproduction is concerned (to which I shall return), but in so far as it involves the nurturing and education of our children (like the lioness suckling her cubs and then teaching them to hunt), I would say that, though rarely mentioned, it is almost universally presupposed. No moral philosopher knowingly attempts to rationalize actions or principles of action which foster general happiness or “persons” living together in society at the expense of the nurturing and education of children; one can see that most of them are just assuming that the existing babies are going to survive and become adults like them and their readers in the future, even if they have overlooked what a great deal of deliberate human activity has to go into ensuring that this happens. So I think there is enough similarity for us to expect that, if this naturalistic project were to be pursued, there is no reason at the moment to suppose that it would yield a bizarre characterization of a good human being.

Thus, the standard is consistency with human virtues.

#### Prefer:

#### **One,** Rules are indeterminate because our usage can’t determine its constitutive content. Only a virtue paradigm provides the communal norms capable of expressing the content of moral good and accounting for the decision-making of normal life.

#### Kripke[[3]](#footnote-3)

Following Wittgenstein, I will develop the problem initially with respect to a mathematical example, though the relevant sceptical problem applies to all meaningful uses of language. I, like almost all English speakers, use the word ‘plus’ and the symbol ‘+’ to denote a well-known mathematical function, addition. The function is defined for all pairs of positive integers. By means of my external symbolic representation and my internal mental representation, I ‘grasp’ the rule for addition. One point is crucial to my ‘grasp’ of this rule. Although I myself have computed only finitely many sums in the past, the rule determines my answer for indefinitely many new sums that I have never previously considered. This is the whole point of the notion that in learning to add I grasp a rule: my past, intentions regarding addition determine a[n] unique answer for indefinitely many new cases in the future. Let me suppose, for example, that ‘68 + 57’ is a computation that I have never performed before. Since I have performed — even silently to myself, let alone in my publicly observable behavior — only finitely many computations in the past, such an example surely exists. In fact, the same finitude guarantees that there is an example exceeding, in both its arguments, all previous computations. I shall assume in what follows that ‘68 + 57’ serves for this purpose as well. I perform the computation, obtaining, of course, the answer ‘125’. I am confident, perhaps after checking my work, that ‘125’ is the correct answer. It is correct both in the arithmetical sense that 125 is the sum of 68 and 57, and in the metalinguistic sense that ‘plus’ as I intended to use that word in the past, denoted a function which, when applied to the numbers I called ‘68’ and ‘ 57’ yields the value 125. Now suppose I encounter a bizarre sceptic. This sceptic questions my certainty about my answer, in what I just called the ‘metalinguistic’ sense. Perhaps, he suggests, as I used the term ‘plus’ in the past, the answer I intended for ‘68 + 57’ should have been ‘5’! Of course the sceptic’s suggestion is obviously insane. My initial response to such a suggestion might be that the challenger should go back to school and learn to add. Let the challenger, however, continue. After all, he says, if I am now so confident that, as I used the symbol ‘+’  my intention was that ‘68 + 57’ should turn out to denote 125, this cannot be because I explicitly gave myself instructions that 125 is the result of performing the addition in this particular instance. By hypothesis, I did no such thing. But of course the idea is that, in this new instance, I should apply the very same function or rule that I applied so m any times in the past. But who is to say what function this was? In the past I gave myself only a finite number of examples instantiating this function. All, we have supposed, involved numbers smaller than 57. So perhaps in the past I used ‘plus’ and ‘+’ to denote a function which I will call ‘quus’ [defined as plus in all instances where the numbers are smaller than 57] and symbolize by ‘⊕ ’ . It is defined by: x ⊕ y = x + y, if x, y < 57 = 5 v otherwise. Who is to say that this is not the function I previously meant by ‘+’? The sceptic claims (or feigns to claim) that I am now misinterpreting my own previous usage. By ‘plus’, he says, I always meant quus; now, under the influence of some insane frenzy, or a bout of LSD , I have come to misinterpret my own previous usage. Ridiculous and fantastic though it is, the sceptic’s hypothesis is not logically impossible. To see this, assume the common sense hypothesis that by ‘+’ I did mean addition. Then it would be possible, though surprising, that under the influence of a momentary, ‘high’, I should misinterpret all my past uses of the plus sign as symbolizing the quus function, and proceed, in conflict with my previous linguistic intentions, to compute 68 plus 57 as .5. (I would have made a mistake, not in mathematics, but in the supposition that I had accorded with m y previous linguistic intentions.) The sceptic is proposing that I have made a mistake precisely of this kind, but with a plus and quus reversed. Now if the sceptic proposes his hypothesis sincerely, he is crazy; such a bizarre hypothesis as the proposal that I always meant quus is absolutely wild. Wild it indubitably is, no doubt it is false; but if it is false, there must be some fact about my past usage that can be cited to refute it. For although the hypothesis is wild, it does not seem to be a priori impossible. Of course this bizarre hypothesis, and the references to LSD, or to an insane frenzy, are in a sense merely a dramatic device. The basic point is this. Ordinarily, I suppose that, in computing ‘68 + 57’ as I do, I do not simply make an unjustified leap in the dark. I follow directions I previously gave myself that uniquely determine that in this new instance I should say ‘125’ . What are these directions? By hypothesis, I never explicitly told myself that I should say ‘125’ in this very instance. Nor can I say that I should simply ‘do the same thing I always did’ if this means ‘compute according to the rule exhibited by my previous examples.’ That rule could just as well have been the rule for quaddition (the quus function) as for addition. The idea that in fact quaddition is what I meant, that in a sudden frenzy I have changed my previous usage, dramatizes the problem. In the discussion below the challenge posed by the sceptic takes two forms. First, he questions whether there is any fact that I meant plus, not quus, that will answer his sceptical challenge. Second, he questions whether I have any reason to be so confident that now I should answer ‘125’ rather than ‘ 5’. The two forms of the challenge are related, I am confident that I should answer ‘125’ because I am confident that this answer also accords with what I meant. Neither the accuracy of my computation nor of my memory is under dispute. So it ought to be agreed that if I meant plus, then unless I wish to change my usage, I am justified in answering (indeed compelled to answer) ‘125’, not '5 ’ . An answer to the sceptic must satisfy two conditions. First, it must give an account of what fact it is (about my mental state) that constitutes my meaning plus, not quus. But further, there is a condition that any putative candidate for such a fact must satisfy. It must, in some sense, show how I am justified in giving the answer ‘125’ to ’68 + 57’. The ‘directions’ mentioned in the previous paragraph, that determine what I should do in each instance, must somehow be ‘contained’ in any candidate for the fact as to what I meant. Otherwise, the sceptic has not been answered when he holds that my present response is arbitrary. Exactly how this condition operates will become much clearer below, after we discuss Wittgenstein’s paradox on an intuitive level, when we consider various philosophical theories as to what the fact that I meant plus might consist in. There will be m any specific objections to these theories. But all fail to give a candidate for a fact as to what I meant that would show that only ‘125’ , not ‘5’, is the answer I ‘ought’ to give.

**Two,** Virtues are constitutive of willing any action so it’s a side constraint on ethics because ethics must presume a conception of action for it to be able to guide action.

#### Korsgaard[[4]](#footnote-4)

On this interpretation, when we say that someone has a virtue, we are not merely gesturing third-personally at the fact that she has good principles. We are saying that her passions and emotions are in a condition that is conducive to doing the right thing, to acting on the right principles. To say that someone has a virtue is not just to praise the condition of her will from a third personal point of view, but to assert that she has some specific property that is conducive to the good functioning of her will. Or – to return to my earlier point about the unity of the virtues – it is to assert that she does not have some specific property (e.g. undue fearfulness in the face of certain threats) that is detrimental to the operations of her will. But we can say that while thinking of the will or at any rate of the agent’s principles as something that is separate from virtues themselves. But of course Aristotle himself does not think of the virtues merely as aids to the will, where the will might be conceived as something separate. I cannot adequately defend what I am about to say here so I will just assert it. Aristotle believes that all of our passions and emotions are associated with pleasures and pains, and that pleasures and pains amount to a kind of perception of goodness and badness. He also thinks that our perceptions of goodness and badness move us directly. He says: To perceive, then is like bare asserting or thinking; but when the object is pleasant or painful, the soul make a sort of affirmation or negation, and pursues or avoids the object. … Both avoidance and appetite when actual are identical with this: the faculty of appetite and avoidance are not different, either from one another or from the faculty of sense-perception; but their being is different. To the thinking soul images serve as if they were contents of perception (and when it asserts or denies them to be good or bad it avoids or pursues them.) That is why the soul never thinks without an image. (On the Soul 431a7-16) It follows that all of our passions and emotions together inform a kind of normative conception of the world, in light of which we literally see things as good and bad and act accordingly. I also believe that Aristotle thinks that this normative conception of is the “moving principle” that makes our actions voluntary – that is, that makes them our own (NE 3.1). We act from that conception, in the sense that it is what moves us. If that is right, then for Aristotle there is a way that a person’s virtues are constitutive of her will.

A framework must generate a conception of action otherwise obligations and prohibitions would devolve to arbitrary movement. Virtue ethics is constitutive of willing and taking actions, so it determines what constitutes an action.

Impact calculus:

**First,** the evaluation of whether an action is consistent with virtue is not based on the state of affairs that result but what the agent was tending in her orientation to other people.

#### Boyle and Lavin[[5]](#footnote-5)

We can begin to see how this might be made intelligible by noting that goal-directed progressives characterize a subject here and now by relating it, not necessarily to the actual future, but rather to its own future – to a[n] possible outcome that would count as something the subject itself effected, rather than something that merely happened to it. Part of the point here is not special to goal-directed progressives in particular: in general, a progressive proposition of the form (7) S is doing [something] A is not necessarily falsified because the relevant future state of affairs (S’s having done A) does not come to obtain; it is falsified only if this was not the state toward which [the subject] S was tending, the state which would have come to obtain had nothing interfered with its activity. In this sense, any progressive proposition of form (7) relates its subject, not to the actual future whatever it may be, but rather to a possible future that would count as the subject’s own. Now, the crucial Aristotelian thought is that the distinction between a future that counts as the subject’s own and one that does not must be drawn against the background of a conception of what the subject is and of what belongs to being that kind of thing – that is, of the form it bears and the nature of things that bear this form. This claim may initially sound dark and metaphysical, but we can bring it down to earth by restating it as a point about the relation between truths of the form we have been considering and truths of certain other characteristic shapes. The thought, in effect, is that where there are truths of the form (7), there must also be true judgments of form-attribution, of the form (9) S is an F and true form-characterizing judgments, of the form (10) Fs do 􀀁 (in conditions C) where the description of the activity characteristic of the kind, 􀀁, need not in general be identical to the description that characterizes what the individual is doing (A), although in the simplest sort of case it might be. In the more general case, doing A will be some specific form or manifestation of [the form] 􀀁-ing, as rolling down this hill is a specific manifestation of rolling (S is rolling down this hill; S is a bronze sphere; Bronze spheres roll (when on uneven ground)). The relation that must obtain between A and some corresponding 􀀁 would not be easy to specify, but in any case the Aristotelian thought is: there must be one.

**And,** a virtue ethics paradigm recognizes that we should teach others how to be virtuous.

#### Carhart[[6]](#footnote-6)

Another strength of virtue ethics is that it emphasizes the development of personal character through the teaching and practice of virtues. A key component of this process is the imitation of individuals who are recognized as examples of virtuous character. A pacifist would thus emphasize studying the lives of figures recognized for their peace-promoting standards in order to develop the same positive traits as those people. Different individuals may be upheld as examples of different virtues, and the same may be true for vices. According to William Frankena, the recognition of a moral ideal is critical in motivating one to be a certain kind of person (1993). One interesting implication of these concepts is a high valuation of history, art, and other disciplines that offer insight into human character. Considerations of particular people and whole societies may lead to an understanding of how actions are shaped by character and values, knowledge that is valuable in making practical decisions." (110-111)

And, the state is an expression of human virtues—it is merely a tool without any natural function besides what people create it for. People created the state to continue promoting virtuous people, so a good state would be consistent with human virtues.

**And,** trust is a master virtue with respect to all other virtues because a) it entails the investment in a relationship that moves us to be ethically virtuous at all. Without trust, we would never act compassionately or honestly because we have no reason to believe that it would be appreciated or reciprocated, and b) a well-functioning community where individuals have faith in one another is a prerequisite to cultivating virtues, since virtue is not something we can accomplish by ourselves.

#### Trivigno[[7]](#footnote-7)

I leave open the possibility that the level of social distrust might be accurate and sufﬁciently low to justify gun carrying. One might reasonably ask. Why take the risk involved in trusting? The answer is that trust is important both for the well-functioning of societies and for the virtue and ﬂourishing of individuals. Aristotle explicitly connects the kind of society one lives in with one's prospects for virtue and eudaimonia. For Aristotle, what grounds this connection is the recognition that human beings are social animals that are born into and live in already established social communities. These communities are, or can be, various: family, neighborhood, school, work, city, country, etc. Since we are essentially social, our ﬂourishing is going to have to happen within and amongst these communities." These effects may be seen both at the interpersonal and communal level. Though there is little research on the relationship between social trust and interpersonal trust, at least one study suggests that social trust, or the propensity to trust strangers, affects relational trust, such that a relationship between two people with very high propensities to trust strangers results in the highest degree of interpersonal trust.” If this is right, then social distrust will adversely affect interpersonal trust, and this will at least affect personal relationships in a negative manner. Being a better, more virtuous friend and spouse may be thus linked to social trust. On the communal level, the value of social trust is that, if it is reasonable, it can allow for a greater level of communal cooperation, which can enable the development of virtues and increase not only one’s own potential for virtue and ﬂourishing, but that of one's fellow citizens as well. Uslaner endorses the portrait of “trusters as ideal citizens” who are tolerant, active in the community, help to solve collective action problems, give to charity, and volunteer; as a result of these, they tend to feel good about themselves.” If this is right, then social trust may itself be a virtue. By sustaining the mental habits that undergird the willingness to kill in self-defense, one risks developing a disposition to social distrust, and as I hope to have shown, this involves potential harmful consequences for virtue and ﬂourishing. Even in the case where social distrust is warranted, it is not morally desirable because it diminishes one’s prospects for ﬂourishing. Several studies have indicated that social trust is on the decline in the United States and has been for some time;54 if this is the new normal, as it were, then it would seem that, from the neo-Aristotelian perspective, we are accepting a state of society that is increasineg inhibiting its citizens’ ability to ﬂourish. The solution, as it were, [is] would be to work to build up social trust such that people do not feel the need to arm themselves and are able to ﬂourish, not to normalize an armed citizenry and just accept the kind of society that Aristotle would regard as uncivilized.”

The purpose of handgun ownership is self-defense—this is undergirded by the view that the world is a fundamentally unsafe place where all others represent threats. This is a self-reinforcing illusion that is strengthened by carrying guns, cultivating a disposition of distrust—the handgun ban is an orientation against this.

#### Trivigno[[8]](#footnote-8)

In this section, I turn my mention to the core belief that underlies the willingness to use a gun in self-defense [is], namely, that becoming the victim of a violent crime is likely enough to warrant and to maintain the habit of gun carrying. A complex set of beliefs seems to be involved, which amount to a kind of worldview. On this worldview, violent crime is likely because the world is a dangerous place ﬁlled with unscrupulous people. As I mention above, arguments for increased gun carrying often use anecdotes of crime in order to put the audience in the “proper” emotional position. The cognitive purpose of these anecdotes is to generate the “proper” account of the world, that is, as a fundamentally unsafe place in which responsible people need to carry a gun in order to protect themselves from dangerous criminals. As with the emotions, the habit of gun carrying will build on and reinforce these thoughts about the world repeatedly and non-consciously. As I will show, this worldview hinders one's ability to develop virtues and to obtain objective goods necessary to eudaimonia. Habitual, repeated non-conscious mental representations involving aspects of this worldview may encourage the development of both moral and intellectual vices. This is because the beliefs one has about the world affect one’s dispositions toward other people in a way that affects one’s judgments about them one way or the other. In a recent study, it was found that people who wield guns are more likely to perceive that other people are wielding guns; the authors conclude that “by virtue of affording a perceived the opportunity to use a gun, he or she was more likely to classify objects in a scene as a gun and, as a result, to engage in threat-induced behavior.” In short, carrying a gun may produce a perceptual bias that veriﬁes and reinforces previously held ideas about the dangerousness of the world. To the extent that one’s adherence to the worldview is inﬂexible and lacks nuance, one will lack intellectual virtues, which are, very roughly, those dispositions that enable us to track the truth.32 This worldview is warranted or justiﬁed only under certain conditions, namely, those in which the worldview accurately portrays the state of the world. Accurately construing an area as unsafe requires, at minimum, that there be a relatively high likelihood that one will become the victim of violent crime. But if carrying a gun increases the chances that one will perceive others as threats, then the gun carrier seems subject to a kind of self-reinforcing illusion. Gun carriers do seem to believe that crime is above average in their neighborhoods.” but, given their subjection to the show illusion, it is not clear that their belief is always warranted. Consider that, unlike typical criminals or crime victims, permit holders tend to be “married, wellcducated, middle-aged, upper-middle- class Whites?" Their perceptions of the level of crime seem to rely on certain racial biases: “Perceived crime . . . responds to the proximity of blacks?” In other words, it seems that the closer one is to an African American neighborhood, the greater one perceives the risk of crime, even for one who is not likely to ﬁnd oneself in that neighborhood. Thus, carriers may be using a morally dubious heuristic device (about African Americans) that serves to overstate the degree to which they are in danger. Prior victimization, which is clearly relevant to the question of safety, seems also to produce a bias, that is, it leads one to overstate the crime rate in one's surroundings. To the extent that the repeated representation of aspects of this worldview makes it impervious to contravening evidence, one develops certain intellectual vices. In the grip of the worldview, one might develop a kind of intellectual rigidity, or narrow-mindedness, about the feasible options for understanding safety-relevant evidence. One may exhibit prejudice or partiality in interpreting evidence about, for example, certain people’s typical motivations. In short, one may become intellectually blind to contravening evidence. To the extent that the worldview encourages anti-social dispositions, one may lack moral virtues and develop moral vices. For example, one may become suspicious when encountering strangers, [and] cynical about their motives, scornful about their concerns, insensitive to their suffering, and contemptuous of them in general. Empirical evidence on the attitudes of gun owners reveals that they are far more likely to endorse punitive beliefs about criminals, including support for the death penalty, and gun carriers “were more likely [than non-carrying owners] to believe that the courts are not harsh enough.”37 Furthermore, the use of “the proximity of a young black population as an indicator of crime” seems to rely on highly problematic racial attitudes, suggesting that African Americans are particularly dangerous.” It is not difﬁcult to see how certain moral virtues will be harder to develop, given these beliefs. Take, for example, the virtue of compassion, which one might roughly deﬁne as the recognition of the suffering of others coupled with the motivation to alleviate it. Someone with punitive views will have a harder time seeing the suffering of a criminal as cause for concern, much less a cause for action. This is problematic, since the suffering of criminals should, at least sometimes, be a cause for both concern and action. If one is blind to this suffering, and to the suffering of African Americans, on the highly problematic assumption that they might be criminals, then one will not be able to embody the virtue of compassion.” […] Habitual gun carrying seems not only to manifest social distrust, but to contribute to it as well, thus further damaging the community. It is a manifestation of social distrust in that the motivation for gun carrying assumes at the start that there are dangerous and untrustworthy people out there who are likely enough to attack that one is warranted in carrying a concealed weapon. Habitual gun carrying contributes to social distrust because the agent will not participate in society as a trusting member, refuses to accept a certain level of vulnerability, denies that trust is warranted, and makes no effort to cultivate trust. As I noted above, carrying a gun produces a bias that increases the likelihood that one perceives others to be armed. Research suggests that this bias is not distributed evenly: it seems that people are more likely to perceive African Americans (than others) as armed.‘6 In short, one ends up distrusting certain socially or racially identiﬁable groups of people more than others. Since a number of social, cooperative goods are enabled by social trust, it is no small observation that gun carrying erodes it. Social trust seems to stand in a causal relationship with institutional trust, or trust in institutions. Some theories of social trust indicate that efﬁcient institutions produce social trust and that socially trusting individuals contribute to efﬁcient institutions. One sees this manifested in the research on gun carrying. Gun carriers are more likely to believe that the police are ineffective in protecting them and that they therefore need to depend on themselves. The relationship between a lack of trust in society’s protection measures and the perceived likelihood of crime are interdependent. In a telling observation, Lizotte and Bourda claim that “[e]ven in the context of a high crime rate, large-scale reductions in gun ownership for protection could be brought about by convincing individuals that the criminal justice system can and will protect them.” This shows that trust in institutional effectiveness and social trust are related, and it seems that at least some gun carriers are responsive to the perception of increased institutional effectiveness. However, it suggests that gun carrying also contributes to the perception of institutional ineffectiveness, such that social distrust and distrust in institutions seem mutually reinforcing.

**And,** The Aff is an act of experimentation – such strict gun laws have never been implemented in the United States, but when our rate of gun deaths is so high it’s obvious that something is wrong with the status quo. There is merit in a process of virtuous experimentation – even if you’re not sure that the Aff is a good idea, it’s key to developing more data. Moral knowledge can be built, like scientific knowledge, on data gleaned through experimentation—this is how we gain insight into the truth.

#### Dewey[[9]](#footnote-9)

The point I am making may be summed up by saying that **it is a** complete **error to suppose** that **efforts** at social control depend **upon** the prior existence of a **social science**. The reverse is the case. **The building up of social science**, that is, of a body of knowledge in which facts are ascertained in their significant relations, **is dependent upon putting social planning into effect**. It is at this point that the misconception about physical science, when it is taken as a model for social knowledge, is important. **Physical science** did not develop because inquirers piled up a mass of facts about observed phenomena. It **came into being when [people]** men **intentionally experimented**, on the basis of ideas and hypotheses, **with observed phenomena to modify them** and disclose new observations. **This process is self- corrective and self-developing**. Imperfect and even **wrong hypotheses, when acted upon, brought to light significant phenomena which made improved ideas and improved experimentations possible**. The change from a passive and accumulative attitude into an active and productive one is the secret revealed by the progress of physical inquiry. Men obtained knowledge of natural energies by trying deliberately to control the conditions of their operation. The result was knowledge, and then control on a larger scale by the application of what was learned.

1. Philippa Foot [British philosopher, known for her work in Aristotelian ethics]. “Natural Goodness.” Oxford University Press: USA; (Dec., 2003) p. 15 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Rosalind Hursthouse. “On Virtue Ethics.” pp. 108-110. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Saul Kripke. Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language: An Elementary Exposition. 1982. Harvard University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Christine M. Korsgaard. “How to be an Aristotelian Kantian Constitutivist.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Matthew Boyle and Douglas Lavin. “Goodness and Desire.” Harvard University, Oxford UP. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Rebecca Carhart. “Pacifism and Virtue Ethics,” Lyceum, Volume XI, Number 1. 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Franco V. Trivigno. “Guns and Virtue: The Virtue-Ethical Case Against Gun Carrying.” Public Affairs Quarterly. Vol. 27, No. 4. October 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
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