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## Representing the Powerful Principle of Virtue Ethics: Commitment at Workplaces

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### ABSTRACT

The emergence of virtue ethics as a value foundation of society can be traced back to ancient philosophers. Having a committed workplace is a significant advantage for any organization. A committed workplace establishes a level of enthusiasm among employees that keeps them motivated to perform their duties and assignments, which provides benefit for both employees and organizations. Commitment at the workplace also provides subtle rewards such as pride, value, and positivity that one may experience. Irrespective of extrinsic or intrinsic motivation, some benefits are achieved thus driving commitment. However, another side of commitment referred to as blind commitment can ultimately make the company lose its susceptibility to innovations and adaptability to changes. This paper aims to explore the reasons behind commitment at the workplace as an appropriate paradigm of virtue ethics. The paper further subsequently discriminates this form of commitment from blind commitment for long-term benefits at the workplace. The paper aims to explore the extensiveness and intensity of virtue ethics that explains general moral philosophy and affects business and management ethics.

### KEYWORDS

philosophy, virtue, ethics, commitment, workplaces, organizations

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## Introduction

Moral theory often conveys ideas about actions that describe whether an action is right or wrong and good or bad. Moral theory attempts to answer the questions that replicate general moral debates, and discussions often lead to moral arguments. For example, when someone states that a specific action is morally right or wrong, it would be reasonable to inquire their thoughts behind the questionable action. Such inquiries lead to moral arguments, and these moral arguments lead to moral judgements which “are often of the utmost importance” (Waluchow, 2003, p. 15). Moral arguments are frequently accompanied by clarity of thoughts and understanding after a thorough analysis of problems, quandary, and notions that need to be addressed and practiced. For example, it may be considered morally wrong to kill a person, but if the person has raped and killed several innocent girls will it still be wrong? As another example, will an act of a father who could not keep a promise towards his child because of his work be considered as wrongful? A methodical examination of these examples would indeed provide a precision in the thought process as well as weigh the morality of actions. Some people would argue that, although the act of killing is wrong, killing a rapist is not a crime. Regarding the second example, breaking a promise is wrong but if the father’s intention is right and due to external factors, he cannot cope with the situation to keep his promise towards his child, he is not wrong. Likewise, there are several understandings of right and wrong actions and its philosophical underpinnings may sometimes lead to numerous moral judgements. Hence, moral theory is a must for every individual as it serves precision and provides reliability of an action.

We now come to believe that the hypothetical aim of moral theory is to unravel the fundamental nature of right and wrong actions such that one may become able to explain why a certain action is right or wrong and good or bad. However, the next question that follows is: Does there exist any fixed set of principles that determine whether an action is right or wrong? Studies indicate that perhaps several underlying principles may determine an action as right or wrong. However, “although the rightness or wrongness of actions depends on certain underlying features of actions, such features vary so much from case to case that there is no fixed set of underlying features to be discovered” (Timmons, 2013, p. 4). There are several moral theories like moral relativism, divine command theory, deontology, Kantian theory, moral pluralism, and many others that have been defined differently by moral theorists often counteracting the preceding definitions; nevertheless, the primary purpose of all moral theories is to provide standard and systematic answers to moral questions like *What to do?* and *How to behave in a particular situation?*

Thus, standing in the tradition of moral philosophy and moral judgement, it can be assumed that there is a standard moral point of view that navigates to make ethical decisions and that this moral point is further evaluated again based on ethical judgement. What can be derived from this approach is that there is a specific background of philosophy that provides an unbiased index where people can gauge their arguments or actions so that a decision can finally be made. Interestingly, concepts and theories on inability to comprehend or make decisions on rightness and

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wrongness, the goodness and badness of things also exist. One such theory claims that, in a certain situation that requires judgement or administration based on moral theory, one may not make subsequent decisions due to the lack of moral thinking. This theory is called moral or ethical blindness that incapacitates one's notions or views on making or acting upon a judgement. In such a situation, one may be completely blind towards adapting ethical dimensions towards deciding or concluding. In short, "people may behave unethically without being aware of it—they may even be convinced that they are doing the right thing" (Palazzo et al., 2012, p. 324) and realize later that they were involved in an unethical decision-making process. The central basis of ethical or moral blindness is that under certain circumstances the moral facet of deciding gradually fades away and that the decision maker slowly becomes unconscious of it. Often, such unethical decisions are promoted when one is completely disengaged from making decisions based on moral dimensions and this can be triggered by individualistic preferences, situational contexts, and organizational forces. Focusing on the organizational forces, employees may be more precisely associated with such virtues as obedience, commitment, and role identification. These virtues do not let the employees be logical or critically evaluate a given situation. Such blindness in moral thinking leads to blindness in commitment. Employees can completely turn a blind eye towards ethical decision-making and stay committed more towards their roles and responsibilities as instructed by their authorities than their ethics and moral.

Moving ahead with the flow of the paper, it would be apt to mention here that unlike other moral theories that primarily focus on the morality of an action, virtue ethics chiefly emphasizes the morality of character or, in simple words, on being good or bad. Overall, virtues are morally good qualities that deserve praise. In this connection, virtue refers to "a disposition or a pattern in someone's character or personality that leads them to act morally" (van Hooft, 2014, p. 1). These traits of character are admirable and often urged by the society to be practiced. They are loyalty, trust, kindness, courage, honesty, patience, and the like. However, the concept of virtue is not similar in every context. For example, the concept of virtue may vary between a male and a female. The male is considered as the head of the family who is supposed to take risks, be strong, and earn bread and butter for his family, while the female is expected to show the virtue of care and nurturance for the family. Similarly, such professions as medicine and nursing practice modesty and devotion, whereas the military professions consider these virtues as meekness and estimate straightforwardness and assertion. Furthermore, the younger generation may observe the concept of virtue different from the older generation and likewise. Let us say the older generation would believe in walking to save money, whereas the younger generation would ride vehicles to save time. In the examples mentioned above, each of virtues stands correct based on its respective context. Studies claim that even if one's attainment of a virtue is tied to some culturally, socially, gender, or generation "dependent particularities, one relatively quickly learns their formal and simultaneously universal core" (Höffe, 2010, p. 129). In a nutshell, we understand that virtues are mostly context-dependent. One immediately learns the virtue and also understands how it is supposed to be used in its specific and universal mainstay. When someone is loyal, it is immediately learned

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that loyalty is the key to building good relationships. Loyalty must be maintained at personal grounds, professional and even national levels. This virtue becomes highly compatible with one's character. In contrast, for those who have not learnt in general the use of loyalty or have not shown devotion or faithfulness, this universal core of loyalty is unidentified and thus remains truly unclaimed.

As already discussed, virtues emphasize characteristic traits that guide how an individual ought to behave. However, virtues are sometimes confused with values. In their study, van Oudenhoven et al. (2012) state that values are desirable but may not be put into practice and that is why not all values may be considered virtues. Common examples under this category are humor, beauty, and intelligence that, although being values, may not be virtues, as virtues "refer to concrete social interactions between individuals, which is why virtues can become guiding principles when people try to enhance social cohesion or integration of immigrant groups" (p. 29). Based on similar examples, the display of commitment can then be considered as a virtue, since commitment augments social bonding (Hirschi, 1969). Thus, commitment as a virtue stands equal along with other moral characteristic features such as honesty, sincerity, civility, dedication, competence, courtesy, tolerance, justice, integrity, compassion, benevolence, truthfulness, trustworthiness, courage, faithfulness, collegiality, loyalty, optimism, and selflessness and can be perceived within the cluster of virtue ethics (Lawton, 2005) that improve interpersonal connection and bonding.

Commitment is considered as an act of "resolution, a plan, a decision, a choice that is treated by the person making it as not to be altered simply at will" (Chartier, 2017, p. 71). An act subjected to change or altered as and when required or according to convenience is not commitment. Rather, an act that is more conscious and determinate is commitment. Commitment is caring deep with no holding back. The notion of commitment is purely distinct and originates, in its most profound form, from an individual's perception, heart, or inner self. It may "not be confused with intention to follow a course of action or with involvement in a course of action" (Walton & Krabbe, 1995, p. 14) because the intention is only a thought of doing an action and involvement reveals the degree of participation in it. On the other hand, commitment is an intense affair.

After understanding the concept of commitment as a virtue, it is further essential to gauge its depth at the workplace. Workplaces are rapidly shifting and so does our need to understand the actions and consequences of commitment or the complexities involved in the process and the varying results that are achieved to provide for diverse workplaces' practices and policies. It is essential to examine the inconsistent concepts related to commitments at the workplace which have been relatively significant because of workplace concerns. In an organization, a committed employee is considered as the one who sticks through ups and downs, does work diligently, puts a lot of efforts to increase the productivity, protects organization's assets and makes organization's goals as one's own. However, numerous changes affect workplace commitment such as changing relationships, work forms, people and positions, and organizational goals. Each change has made commitment more significant and applicable than ever. Furthermore, any such a change or drive that

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keeps the level of enthusiasm high in an employee igniting a feeling of responsibility towards the organizational goals, mission, and vision or any other relevant targets in the workplace is termed as workplace commitment.

At such an expository point when we now have an awareness of workplace commitment, the question that arises is: Does there exist a drawback of the commitment too or in other words are there any limitations to commitment? Will the virtuous act of commitment be justified if an organization “leads employees to accept the status quo even if it ultimately means that the company loses its ability to innovate and adapt to change” (Meyer & Allen, 1997, p. 3)? Alternatively stated, does blind commitment (Randall, 1987) stand morally correct even if the organization provides pay checks only for the working hours, but with an indefinite approach towards the employees to promote learning and growth? Studies indicate that “high level of organizational commitment can blind employees to evil and render the individual vulnerable to unethical and corrupt behavior in the interests of achieving corporate goals” (Hildreth et. al., 2016). Too much of commitment remains unidentified causing ill-effects on health, happiness, and creativity. Blind commitment may end up turning the employees exposed to risks and hazards in an organization. The current paper explores the importance of commitment as powerful principles of virtue ethics and also emphasizes the limitation of employee commitment mostly focusing on blind commitment.

## Literature Review

The study of commitment has been a topic of grabbing interest and a radical concept to comprehend the varying nature of human behavior. Interestingly, commitment has been conceptualized and defined variedly in the literature. As a study but “treated as a word requiring no such definition” (Becker, 1960, p. 32), commitment was predominantly and explicitly studied in the fields of psychology and sociology. However, after 1960, most of the workplace literature mentioned the notions of commitment and loyalty of employees towards an organization only being highly conformed than that of their objectives. At such a point, the research interest of psychologists and sociologists centralized on the engagement of employees in collective actions like strikes and negotiations. Through commitment towards their employers, union groups are able to grapple with the difference of status and power between the workers and the management thus improving social welfare (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939). Gradually, the notion of commitment gained widespread use in the workplace literature. Although many authors studied commitment as a predisposition and a mechanism through which commitment to a course of action may occur (Becker, 1960), there were other studies which viewed commitment more as a psychological perspective largely based on attitude (Kiesler, 1971). This attitude unites an employee with a goal, and the behavior followed by the drive to achieve the goal is considered as a commitment. Contemporarily, it was Hall (1971) who described career commitment as “the strength of one’s motivation to a chosen career role” (p. 59). Further studies also indicated the experiences of the employees who had faced several hardships attaining rewards that

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in one way or another encouraged their bonding with an organization (Grusky, 1966). Henceforth, multiple constructs on commitment at workplaces such as cosmopolitan integration and organizational introjections (Gouldner, 1960), organizational control and use of power for employee management (Etzioni, 1961), escalation of commitment (Staw & Fox, 1977) were identified providing insightful comprehension of commitment and its study. Later, some authors described it as a relative strength of an individual's identification and involvement in a particular organization (Steers, 1977). It was after the development of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Mowday et al., 1979) or later the Three Component Model (Allen & Meyer, 1990) of organizational commitment containing three components—attentive commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment—that corresponded to distinct psychological states and achieved a broad recognition, “a construct of importance to employees and organizations that managers could measure and attempt to influence” (Klein et al., 2009, p. 6). Studies indicating the same reasons describe commitment as a “psychological state” (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p.14), a “psychological attachment” (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986, p. 493) or “psychological bound” (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990, p. 171). Other studies claimed that “commitment is an attitude that develops from a process called identification, which occurs when one experiences something, someone or some idea as an extension of oneself” (Fink, 1992, p. 7). Still, more studies described commitment as a constituent of three factors like “a strong belief in and acceptance of an organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization and a strong desire to maintain membership in an organization” (Mohan, 1993, p. 71). Over the past two decades commitment was mentioned within several conceptualizations with some variations, however, “despite more than 40 years of theory development and research there is still no easy answer” (Klein et al., 2009, p. 39) to a proper definition of commitment.

The origin of ethics often arises from the simplest questions like *How to lead a life?* and *What one must do to lead a good life?* Answers to these questions are in one's wants in life. A little contemplation would clarify that there are always good things like living and doing well that one most importantly wishes to achieve. Everything in life is based on desire, that is stronger than a mere wish. While wishes remain in thoughts, desires generate actions. These actions are aimed at achieving one's desires. Desires are the sources of actions that represent human living. Early ethicists developed far-reaching accounts on moral psychology and human behavior because of the same reasons. Ethicists view ethics as life-forming actions derived from a basic concept that “if what we do originates in our natural desires, then the ethics originates in our natural desires for doing well and living well” (Devettere, 2002, p. 13). One explanation that may be put here is that our living is moved mostly by desires and not solely by reason. These desires function independently of reason. The psychology of desire bounces from the thoughts based on cognitive ability and can be rational or from the feelings without much reflection that can be non-rational. Studies also claim that experiences take place when there is conflict between non-rational desires and reason. For instance, at times our bodies feel the need to get indulged and this provoke us to gratify what we usually judge to be insensible or be

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angry at actions that we deprecate as unfair or malicious, “it is when this conflict occurs that the desires are said to be irrational as impelling us to volitions opposed to our deliberate judgements” (Sidgwick, 1884, p. 11). Sometimes we give in, sometimes we do not—and that is when we strongly feel the impulsive force of such irrational desires. Mostly, such irrational desires are common among animals for their actions are determined by their instincts resulting from the incapability to reflect.

Interestingly, Plato (ca. 360–380 B.C.E./1888) had profound concern about defining different aspects of desires. In his book *The Republic* (Book IV), Plato mentions that sometimes non-rational desires may be a cause of some definite behavior among mature human beings. Plato describes that three parts of human soul that are the appetitive, the spirited, and the rational have their own desires consisting of urges towards pleasure like basic and bodily needs, emotions like sorrow, happiness, anger, and goodness like ones that are truly good respectively. The rational aspect based on logical reasoning decides whether the appetitive and intense desires are good for human life and living. While various philosophers interpret the three aspects of desires differently, Socrates believes, all human desires are rational. Plato claims some of the non-rational desires spring from the appetitive and spirited zones. Ethics for Socrates is rational as “it’s based on accurate knowledge that assists in making moral decisions, while for Plato, it is more than rational as we need to shape and form our non-rational desires through training, education, and the development of good habits, dispositions, and attitude, while Aristotle calls it intellectual virtue and character virtue” (Devettere, 2002, p. 16). Hence, virtue ethics focuses mainly on characteristics like justice, courage, honesty, love and the like. Plato’s view within the tradition of work and commitment elucidates that “everyone born into this world has an innate predisposition for a particular kind of work. Only by the finding and doing of this work can a person become who he or she truly is” (Sworder, 2005, p. 184). Only this predilection solely determines an individual’s personality, irrespective to any other comparisons with social conditioning, birth place, family background or any other factors that define the quest of human existence. The sole purpose of life is to carry out this work and make efforts to see that the task is completed. Furthermore, Plato strongly believes that every individual is naturally in-built for one specific kind of work only and is better served by doing just that since this is what complies with one’s intrinsic inclination. Considering his tradition towards ethics, Plato just like Aristotle maintains a virtue-based eudemonistic conception of ethics which solely delves around the happiness or well-being of an individual. On this, Plato preserves “the highest aim of moral thought and conduct and the virtues are the requisite skills and dispositions needed to attain it” (Frede, 2017). For example, the requisite skills of a race horse are whatever that drives it towards the commitment of running well. Similarly, the skill of an eye enables it to see well. This further ideates that anything that has excellence enables things to perform well and this is what Plato embarked on to ascertain, “a truly satisfactory account of any virtue would identify what it is, show how possessing it enables to live well, and indicate how it is best acquired” (Meinwald, n.d.). What is imperative therefore is the stringent and equivalent connection that keeps together work, ethics, and commitment and enabling and engaging rational emotional response towards stimuli.

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As an umbrella term, virtue ethics includes several of distinct theories and claims that provides distinguishing advances towards ethical and moral issues. These theories have originated in the works of Plato, Aristotle, Hume and others, it would therefore be quite an impossible and exhaustive task to narrate all the diverse theories. However, this paper would attempt to provide a glimpse wherever apt, more from the unparalleled theories as prescribed by Aristotle (ca. 350 B.C.E./1889) as it was here in his theories that reflected the development of ethics, moral psychology, and individual behavior. In the words of Aristotle, “virtue is the law of our nature under which law we are born” (Aristotle, ca. 350 B.C.E./1889, p. ix) and by that same law if we could attain any virtue we would be satisfied. This concept has also been backed by Crisp and Slote (1997) as they mention that “in his book *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle argued that the best life for a human being—*eudaimonia*—consists in the exercise of the virtues (or the ‘excellences’)” (p. 2). In other words, a life cannot be worth living without the exercise of virtue ethics. Although such theories have been highly criticized by Moore (1962) that “Aristotle’s definition of virtue is not adequate and express a false ethical judgment considering it highly unsystematic and confused, owing to his attempt to base it on the naturalist fallacy” (pp. 176–177).

Some authors understand the concept of virtue ethics by distinguishing it from deontology and utilitarianism. They explicate that while a utilitarian chiefly emphasizes the consequences of doing an action that in ways make the most of well-being, a deontologist primarily underlines actions that deal duties so one acts in accordance with moral duties, virtue ethics emphasizes “motives and character of moral agents” (Hursthouse, 1999, p. 2). Both utilitarianism and deontology deal with ethics of actions and behavior, not the outcome or consequences. Substantiating this claim, some studies reveal that both utilitarianism and deontology have severe limitations as they leave no space for motivation or cognition often leading to contradicting contexts as ethics “measure and compare the utilities of various people and reduce ethics to rules and leaving no place for conscious choice giving rise to conflicting rules” (Storchevoy, 2018, p. 56). Only virtue ethics strives to remain in a transitional position emphasizing exclusively the requisites of utilitarianism, deontology, and other ethics. Virtue ethics is rich in norms of excellence of character and well-disposed in “reason, feelings, desires, motives, emotions, as well as actions” (Swanton, 2001, p. 16218). Virtue ethics is thus an amalgamation of all the exquisite inner states that construct and reflect an individual’s character. Together, all these intrinsic qualities produce moral goods; however, “the combination of motivation and reason in specific contexts distinguishes virtue ethics from utilitarianism and deontology” (van Staveren, 2007, p. 27). Hence, while virtue ethics comprises all valued attributes, the character is reflected only on having good motivations and good reasons for actions. Griffin (1998) further supports this, claiming that “the virtues are grounds, they provide reasons, for our decisions about right and wrong” (p. 57). In other words, virtues are plain and basic, giving judgements about the right and wrong actions. Still, further studies identify virtue ethics with personality traits and describe it as “a disposition to act, desire, and feel that involves the exercise of judgment and leads to a recognizable human excellence or instance human flourishing” (Yearley, 1990, p. 87). Virtue ethics hypothesizes the

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distinctive states of an individual that persuades leading to an action considering those that induce morally good actions or more comprehensively socially acceptable actions. It is based on the principle that an individual with moral virtues is certainly ethical in comparison to others who solely follow rules or fulfil duties. Hence, here the emphasis is upon the character of a person and not on the nature of their actions. Essentially, the approach defends that people should act consistently, which is the crucial characteristic of ethical people.

Providing a detailed analysis on virtue ethics and workplace commitment, now the question arises in the concept of moral blindness and particularly, considering the context of workplaces, to what extent or not the concept of moral blindness is reflected. The concept of moral blindness is proposed by Bernard Stiegler in his book *States of shock: Stupidity and knowledge in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (2015), where he states that moral blindness is an act of stupidity. While he concludes that stupidity is human; however, the lack of thinking links to blindness. However, Bird (1996) views that people in fact carry moral beliefs but somehow fail in articulation. Bird expresses, “they remain silent out of deference to the judgements of others, out of fear that their comments will be ignored or out of an uncertainty that what they might have to say is really not that important” (p. 1). They may even fail to raise questions about happenings that might need investigation or further questioning. This makes them morally mute or silent. In other words, Bird defines moral blindness as a state when “people fail to see or recognize moral concerns and expectations that bear upon their activities and involvements” (p. 85). Interestingly, moral blindness takes place at all levels: personal, social, and more particularly at professional levels with extensive consequences. For instance, “unethical behavior may be deeply ingrained in an organization’s routine procedures, including its related artifacts like forms, standard operating procedures” (Kump & Scholz, 2022). These routine procedures may execute employees to carry out their roles and responsibilities in a way like things are often done, i.e. without questioning. In other words, such unethical practices are routinized without much critical thinking or questioning resulting in blind commitment.

### **The Virtue of Workplace Commitment**

Workplaces are dynamic systems working for a mission. There are many factors that help run this system and affect its growth development. Commitment is one of the many radical factors that affect the performance of a given workplace. It is also apparent to understand why employees remain committed to their work or organization. Some studies claim that the shifting demands of the current markets and organizations, the increasing attachment of more and more people to the organization indeed gets critical “when innovation, continuous improvement, high-quality standards, and competitive prices are demanded of companies and employee discretionary effort comes to be an essential resource” (González & Guillén, 2007, p. 401). Other expressions also suggest that the objective may be either intrinsic originating from within self like personal values, attributes, or extrinsic arising from external factors like norms and work experiences that keeps employees motivated to move forward.

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Reasons behind an employee's commitment towards organization are numerous, they vary from employees to employees. However, research reveals that it all depends on the compatibility between employees and organizations that occurs when "at least one entity provides what the other needs or they share similar fundamental characteristics or both" (Kristof, 1996, p. 5). General fundamental characteristics may be common goals that both an organization and employees share. Further studies disclose that commitment takes place mostly because of values (Bar-Haim, 2019, p. 16) found as a common feature in both employees and an organization. Another reason that binds an employee with an organization is an employee's sense of identification with the work that they do, so much that they are entirely absorbed into it. Some may connect more with team spirit being the ideology and never letting it down. Others do it for an organization as a whole and how it works for its employees and contributing to that effort is the driving factor behind commitment. Hence, one may assume that each reason is specific and different from others and each reason indicates high levels of commitment. Each reason further reveals some kind of characteristics traits like having values, sharing commonality, identification with work, not letting co-workers down, obligation towards an organization. These characteristic traits are morally good and are valued as fundamental principles on a morally good being. Such virtues are comprehended to promote collective and individual greatness.

Virtue ethics has been regarded as an unremitting process where individuals evolve for good. Workplace environment today has primarily focused on virtue ethics as it is virtue ethics, although not the only parameter, that contributes to the growth and expansion of an ethical mindset. Some research states that the ethics approximated by Aristotle often "diverges from his predecessors as he believed that individual character was at the heart of ethical behavior rather than compliance with rules or duty" (Meglich, 2015, p. 2). According to Aristotle (ca. 350 B.C.E./1889), the theory of virtue ethics has its own strengths comprising that "the more involved are people in virtuous acts, the happier they would be as happiness is the chief good and as an energy of the soul according to the best virtue in a perfect life" (p. xvi). However, taking happiness as the sole purpose of life, a question arises: Can the pursuit of happiness be relied on the act of commitment? As one study professes, "a commitment involves two components. One is an act: the summoning up of a resolve. The other is the content: whatever is the object of the resolve" (Cahn & Vitrano, 2007, p. 1888). From the said perspective, it may be suggested that unless an employee intentionally and willingly attempts to resolve something he may not be involved in the virtuous act of commitment. One has to learn and practice virtues to be virtuous consistently. Perhaps that is why when employees at the workplace involve themselves more into commitment willingly and persistently, they tend to remain happy and thereby be liable to still remain more committed. It acts like a cyclic process.

Workplace commitment is largely driven by employees' motivation. Studies believe that "commitment can serve as a particularly powerful source of motivation and can often lead to persistence in the course of action even in the face of opposing forces, such as outcome contingencies or fairness concerns" (Gagné,

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2014, p. 37). Many theories and research compare motivation and commitment revealing some similarities. Although both motivation and commitment are the forces mostly implicated for behavior, however, motivation is a broader concept than commitment and “commitment is one among a set of energizing forces that contributes to motivated behavior” (Meyer et al., 2004, p. 994). Most importantly, commitment is generally allocated and is confined to major decisions and long-term implications such as commitment to continue the work in an organization even in trying times or commitment to continue the work with a client, whereas motivation is reserved with minor or short-term implications such as motivation to continue with a team or a project or simply to organize one’s workstation. Aristotle virtue ethics reflects moral questions like *What kind of person do I want to be?* instead of *What should I do in these circumstances?* (Waluchow, 2003, p. 216). In other words, virtue ethics is a character-based ethics fostering individuals to develop good character and motives. According to Aristotle, the significance of motivation plays a vital role in the moral assessment of actions and people. Studies rightly claim that “the ethical assessment of a person’s character is determined only by the motives that determine his actions” (Gaut, 2018, p. 249). However, ethically irrelevant actions that get motivation through any feelings or thoughts may not be considered entirely ethically wrong. This suggests that “the character traits arise from the basis of virtue that is expressed behaviorally because of conflicts with emotional or cognitive traits” (Fleming, 2003, p. 60). Many times, at the workplace, employees may be driven towards wrong actions or dealings for instant gains or shortcuts to success. They may have inappropriate thoughts but can be ethically good as they may have the capability to resist any influence of such thoughts and feelings on their will. Thus, it may be assumed that thoughts and feelings that do not motivate insignificant or unethical actions are equally crucial. Commitment as a virtue is deeply rooted with motivation, embedded and infixed, difficult to remove.

Aristotle claims that “virtue can be either natural or acquired by habit, teaches to think rightly respecting the principle” (Aristotle, ca. 350 B.C.E./1889, p. 197). Does it mean that commitment is a natural tendency and it comes effortlessly to the employees? Virtuous character evolves through recurrent practice as one study asserts “by building, we become builders, by playing the lyre, lyre players and so too we become just by doing just actions and temperate by doing temperate actions” (Rhode, 2019, p. 5). To be precise, much of character is produced through repeated activities so many times that this becomes an individual’s second nature thereby establishing a virtuous disposition of character. Thus, the situations compel people to shape their characters either by bringing something to the situations or taking something away from them. This something is character generally interpreted as positive traits. Furthermore, character interpreted as positive traits explain us ways to lead a good life reflecting stability with choice and will. Natural virtues promote morally good actions and arise from “virtues as the core characteristics like wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence that are universal, perhaps grounded in biology through an evolutionary process” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 11). However, virtue as a rational nature is highly unstable because while

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the inherent traits may drive towards a courageous action, willingness and need may still drive into a conflicting direction which is why habituation is required. As one study explains, “habituation in humans can produce contrary dispositions and the directions in which these dispositions take shape are determined by desire and choice” (Leunissen, 2017, p. 37). This study claims and confronts that virtue traits cannot be permanent and steady; habituation causes an immense impact. Still, more studies claim that natural inclinations may be shaped by some kind of training or education, “the authentic character virtue does not arise until a person does not take charge of his or her life and freely decides what when and how to perform the actions that develop the character” (Yuen, 2020, p. 100). It is evident that commitment as a virtuous act also comes to employees only when they have the freedom to perform their duties that develop their character.

The above section focused mostly on the philosophical analysis of the reasons behind employee’s commitment at the workplace. However, the section below studies the Three Component Model (Allen & Meyer, 1990) that focuses on the psychological reasons behind employees’ commitment at workplaces. The model determines primarily on three factors that are affective commitment (emotional connection), continuance commitment (fear of losing) and normative commitment (obligation) that emphasizes the “want to, need to and ought to” (Matusitz, 2013, p. 234) perspective of commitment. However, it is important to comprehend that “affective, continuance and normative commitment are considered to be components rather than separate types of organization commitment” (Goffin & Helmes, 2000, p. 291). One should not be mistaken that the employees are categorized under these three components; rather, these three components describe how each employee’s feels for the organization at varying degrees. Let us understand the concept in detail and in connection with Aristotle’s philosophical distinction of virtues as a reference that would provide a robust explanation of commitment at workplace.

Aristotle (ca. 350 B.C.E./1889) in his *Nicomachean Ethics* describes that there are many virtues that humans seek through actions and relationships and these virtues can be deterministically ordered according to the relationships. Aristotle further describes the three ends in a relationship that dwell on friendship, namely “friendship for utility, friendship for pleasure and friendship of good people” and this concept clearly solidarizes with the concept of organizational commitment with the three-component model of psychological mindset that are affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Aristotle’s friendship for pleasure is connected to the areas of feelings and desires which can be identified with affective commitment where emotions play a pivotal role and explain one’s attachment towards an action. Similarly, friendship for utility is like continuance commitment where people pursue reward or utility and further make the decision of leaving or staying in an organization after an analysis of cost-benefit principle. And lastly, friendship of good people is compliant with normative commitment where employees stay committed with the organization to pursue the objective of personal distinction or fulfilment. The subsequent sections study in details each of the commitment as prescribed by the three-component model (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

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***Affective Commitment***

Affective commitment is the psychological state of employees where emotions play a vital role. It refers to “the emotional attachment, identification with and involvement” (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 2) at a workplace. There is a genuine desire to be part of the organization as an employee receives job satisfaction. Many authors also tend to claim that “affective commitment develops when involvement in an occupation proved to be a satisfying experience” (Coetsee & Roythorne-Jacobs, 2007, p. 63). In other words, when the employees are provided with ample freedom and opportunities to learn, grow, and develop their skills there will originate a sense of emotional attachment towards the organization. Studies clearly mention that “employees who had greater freedom to accept their job expressed significantly stronger affective commitment to the organization they chose than did those with less freedom” (Meyer & Allen, 1997, p. 50). Furthermore, the development of affective commitment also occurs when an organization understands and is committed to the employee’s personal fulfilment. In return, employees are likely to contribute significantly in bringing more productivity to the organization thereby improving their competence, and resulting in a happier, healthier staff and possible reducing employee turnover (Clausen et al., 2015). It is a psychological give-and-take process of positive emotions. Thus, the development of affective commitment vastly augments when personal values and organization values and goals align fostering “coordination and communication that facilitate job performance and bring desired rewards” (Edwards & Shipp, 2007, pp. 240–241)

***Continuance Commitment***

Continuance commitment occurs when employees evaluate the pros and cons of quitting an organization. Employees tend to weigh the loss and gains of staying in the company where the loss they would experience by leaving may be greater than the gains they might achieve in a new position or company. Continuance commitment is described as “the extent to which employees feel committed to their organizations by virtue of the costs that they feel are associate with leaving” (Meyer & Allen, 1984, p. 375). This suggests employees do not have the emotional attachment to their work or organization, they rather feel the need to continue there because it would be too expensive to quit. Studies claim that “this reluctance to quit may be due to the risk of losing a large bonus by leaving early or because they are well established in the community where they work” (McShane & Von Glinow, 2000, p. 136). Also, other studies indicate that “continuance commitment develops as a result of lack of alternative employment opportunities and an accumulation of side bets, that is investment that increase the costs associated with leaving the organization” (Cohen, 2003, p. 121). However, organizations are often responsible for creating continuance commitment among the employees. Certain company practices bind them through golden handcuffs encouraging them to stick with the organization instead of moving out. Although the organizations stay successful in reducing turnover, they fail to originate emotional attachment thereby leading to low or less engagement in the organization’s behaviors rebating the sense of belonging. In addition, continuance commitment is more likely to promote formal grievances instead of solving interpersonal issues.

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### ***Normative Commitment***

In addition to the “want to” and “need to” perspectives of commitment, the third perception is “ought to” or a sense of obligation that associates an employee with an organization because “remaining a member is the morally right thing to do” (Jex, 2002, p. 134). Morally committed employees engage in activities driven by a sense of duty. Their sense of duty may arise from various reasons, one of which may be “a consequence of socialization experiences and investments made by the organization in the individual” (Dipboye, 2018, p. 217). Thus, employees understand the feel and need of obligation and demonstrate loyalty at their workplaces. At certain levels, the loyalty demonstrated by the employees is based on the fact and their belief that there exists a rational point of view in achieving a goal. Studies discuss that normative commitment perfectly aligns personal identity with rationality. This indicates that employees are bound to achieve this goal considering it as a prescriptive force of ought or, in other words, it means “they think that overall rational is something that they ought to achieve and, in that sense, they have a normative commitment to achieving such unity” (Rovane, 2019, p. 23). Hence, normative commitment is carrying out rational activities out of consideration that essentially springs from a certain rational point of view.

After an analysis of the three components of commitment, it can now be assumed that one common factor in all three of them is the motivation behind remaining committed at the workplaces. For example, in affective commitment there is emotional motivation, in continuance commitment, motivation to continue exists as there are no better options, and in normative commitment motivation entails because of morals and values. This motivation becomes a character trait of an employee that let the employee to be involved in the decision-making process like whether to stay or quit an organization. Such tendencies in ethical decision making “allow a person to decide how to behave in any particular situation” (Oko, 2011, p. 56) in terms of motive rather than the consequences.

Amalgamating the concepts as contributed by the authors and researchers, philosophers and psychologists, commitment at workplaces can be comprehended as a multifaceted construct and one can better understand why employees become committed to an organization only by being aware of this versatility instead of choosing one definition over the other. Commitment can be influenced by several factors like motivation or can be achieved through practice, making it a habit through training and education. The quality of the commitment is largely dependent on the mindset of the individual. For example, if the mindset of the individual is committed more out of willingness than out of fear, the bond is expected to be stronger and last longer. Many employees remain committed to their jobs because of their passion or love for what they do, or sometimes they find their personal goals aligning with those of the organization. At times, many employees stick to their job out of fear of losing what they have. Furthermore, a feeling of obligation to their organization or to their senior may also make them committed to the organization. However, the ultimate fact relies on the notion that when the individuals are provided with the freedom to contribute in a certain assignment or pursue a career, they are more likely to be efficient and productive.

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Hence, commitment can be understood as an internal force that unites an individual to an objective. Likewise, organizations are also expected to be responsible towards the employee's growth and development by providing them ample opportunities to do challenging and significant work. Such opportunities would motivate the employees to develop a sense of belonging towards the workplaces crafting a kind of commitment among the employees. As a dynamic process, commitment reflects the tendency to "bind an employee to the organization; thereby reducing the likelihood of turnover" (Young, 2006, p. 45). This points out that, on the whole, the predisposition of commitment is binding an employee with the organization for equal or mutual benefit. The objective of the mutual benefits fosters the development of an attitude for which both the organization and the employee manifest a commitment mindset. Hence, commitment in itself is a reflection of the actions and the consequences and produces a recurring process, a continuous one, a consistent one.

However, revising all said about commitment and comprehending commitment as an ethical perspective, the point that needs attention here is the following: having its strengths, commitment has limitations as well. By mentioning this, the section below discusses about blind commitment or the downside of commitment emphasizing mainly the disadvantages of commitment.

### **Blind Commitment**

Literature on the concept of moral blindness suggests that a lack of integration of moral thinking in making decisions is defined as moral blindness. Mostly, when employees focus too much on simple following the orders as part of organizational criteria without inquiring the moral radicals of any activity or action, they tend to practice moral blindness. In other words, there is a general pantomime of obedience towards the manager or the authority or towards a functional role in the business organization. This suggests employees who follow moral blindness are incapable of using their thought process and are blindly committed towards the instructions of the administration. The underlying causes of such a behavior pattern can be that due to the lack of moral thinking the employees fail to see an ethical dilemma in their actions. And even if they do, they tend to ignore this ethical dilemma in order to return the favor of their duty as a part of organizational mandate. Somehow the employees are strongly attached to the ideologies of the organization that they cannot see beyond it. Rendtorff (2020) finds "this attachment as an abstraction from concrete human needs and concerns in the business organization" (p. 93). He further elucidates moral blindness as "the dark side of action in organizational systems, and it manifests the need to move towards ethical principles, judgement and ethical recognition in management and administration" (Rendtorff, 2017, p. 6).

Based on an organization's perspective, it is an obvious fact that every organization would want their employees to be committed. It is because a committed workforce appears to positively affect the growth and development of an organization. However, the employees' perspective of being too committed is generally overlooked. Every organization has its hierarchical structure hence, although employees work

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under an organization but there is always an immediate superior whose orders and instructions they are committed to. Those who hold authoritative positions but at the same time lose their own motivation or are suffocated by their own roles and responsibilities may significantly abuse or misguide the commitment of the employees. This may be one of the many reasons behind the existence of blind commitment.

Blind commitment (Randall, 1987) to an organization means that employees accept an organization as it is with all its strengths and weaknesses, faults and flaws, and success and failures. However, can the act of blind commitment be necessarily the act of virtue? One study argues that “a strong commitment to retaining and acting on one’s commitments even through testing circumstances, however is not necessarily virtuous, because such a commitment could equally well be involved in vices of excess” (Rees & Webber, 2013, p. 399). Decoding this, one may assume that vice is anything that “counts against having a good moral character or virtue” (Adams, 2008, p. 36). In other words, vice is anything that contains negative traits in an individual’s character. As already explained in the above sections, virtue is powerful, however, powers sometimes are predisposed to run to excess or, at times, to paucity. This excess of virtue creates vices. Studies determined that “vice is simply an excess of virtue” (Bierbower, 1888, p. 216). For example, too much of courage is rashness, too much of discretion is spinelessness, too much of kindness is assumption, too much of liberty is extravagance, and too much of loyalty is drudgery. In a similar context, the excess of commitment can be dangerous too as “this can lead to an environment where ethically dubious instructions are carried out without question” (Dietz, 2014). Blind commitment supersedes commitment to the extent that it often becomes a cult-like shaping the behavior of the employees. In other way, blind commitment like an excessive subservience to the authority, can largely hamper personal goals and attempts towards self-learning and knowledge gain. This is because the authorities would want their employees to remain glued to their work, group and other activities relevant or irrelevant to their group. On the other hand, employees fear to lose whatever they possess and constantly remain devoted. This further leads to “expenditure of time and energy that is therefore not available to invest elsewhere that is towards family or hobbies” (Meyer & Allen, 1997, p. 3). Furthermore, an employee’s critical thinking gets dampened as in every other situation they have to follow orders and instructions believing it as a part of their duty and justifying their commitment to the workplaces. This attitude is a clear example of blind commitment. The employees believe that their sense of duty makes them committed little knowing that too much of acceptance and saying “yes” all the time is nothing but a slavery. This situation is totally compliant with continuance or normative commitment where employees stick to workplaces due to moral obligation or fear of losing something significant. Hence, evaluating situations is a must.

At workplaces, critical thinking is a must as this ability facilitates the evaluation of one’s own thoughts, feelings, and actions as well as employers, management, stakeholders and others at workplaces. While thinking is considered casual and effortless, “critical thinking calls for persistent effort to apply theoretical constructs to understanding the problem, consider evidence, and evaluate methods or techniques

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for forming a judgement” (Seel, 2012, p. 635). The central notion of critical thinking is to question, assess reasons and go beyond single perspectives of things and situations. Thus, commitment without critical thinking, or logical reasoning and questioning is ineffective. Developing critical thinking is not impossible. Through proper training and guidance employees can be made aware of viewing and thinking of things differently. To a certain extent, if not completely, such training can present to the trainees their ethical emotions that play a crucial role in the processes of ethical deliberations. For example, when certain things go wrong or right at the workplace, ethical emotions notify the employees of such things making them think, assess and question the situations instead of blindly following and saying “yes” to everything. Hence, blind commitment is a vice and should not be promoted.

Evaluating both commitment and blind commitment, it is presumably clear that commitment has both its pros and cons. However, it is surely a difficult task to understand how much commitment is required at the workplace and when is the right time drawing a line between commitment and blind commitment. Further, since critical reasoning is an aspect that differentiates between the two, it can be assumed that an individual should stick to critical reasoning every time before taking any orders and making any decisions. One study cites Aristotle and claims that “natural character virtues without practical reason are blind while effective reasoning without the guidance by moral virtues is either mere cleverness or villainy” (Besser-Jones & Slote, 2015, p. 27). This means that one cannot entirely disregard moral virtues over critical reasoning and vice versa since both the aspects stand clearly as the two extremes and virtue stands in between them. Too much towards any of the extremes is too little towards the other one whereas virtue stands halfway from the two extremes. Hence, while blind commitment at the workplace is one extreme, negligence of duties and responsibilities is another. The golden mean in such a case would be to remain committed towards the organization, superiors, colleagues, with a genuine motivation to stand by them and do things rightly whenever needed, specifically at the times of contingencies. It is an obvious fact that human nature would get attracted towards any of the extremes. At that moment, employees should restrain themselves from getting biased towards one of the extremes and try to be at the halfway from both extremes. Although maintaining the balance between the two extremes is difficult to achieve, it may not be impossible.

## Conclusion

Organizational commitment and its consequences indicate that values and virtues relate closely as competencies and their strong implementation should be considered as an integral feature in any organization. It is imperative to highlight the fact that employees at times are unable to see the ethical dimensions of situations which make them responsible for the consequences of the decisions they have made. After the review of some protuberant and recent research works in the field of organizational commitment this paper brought into limelight the three-dimensional framework that proceeds for a distinction between “continuance”, “affective”, and

“normative” dimensions of commitment and thereby distinguishes them from blind commitment that is a result of moral blindness. In an attempt to satisfy the primary purpose of this paper, the study explored the essence of moral theory and virtue ethics as its integral part. The paper attempted to unravel the rationale behind commitment at the workplace. Commitment can mean a lot of things and can originate from desires, both rational and irrational, and motivation, both intrinsic or extrinsic. It can be related to a psychological state of mind like commitment out of attachment, commitment out of fear, and commitment out of obligation. Similarly, commitment can also have philosophical connotations mostly as a virtue. Based on the principles of Aristotle, any virtue in excess is a vice. Similarly, commitment in excess is blind commitment that lacks critical thinking and hampers personal goals and development. Fortunately, the balance between commitment and blind commitment is, although difficult, but not impossible to achieve. Escaping the extremes and focusing on the mean is a tactic. Hence, a means or a balance between the two commitments creates a treasured work environment that provides a platform for long-term business. Aristotle principles on virtue ethics specify that the greater emphasis should be put on developing personal virtues than building perfect systems. The importance of commitment as the appropriate paradigm of virtue ethics has been established and subsequently discriminated from blind commitment for long-term benefits at workplaces.

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