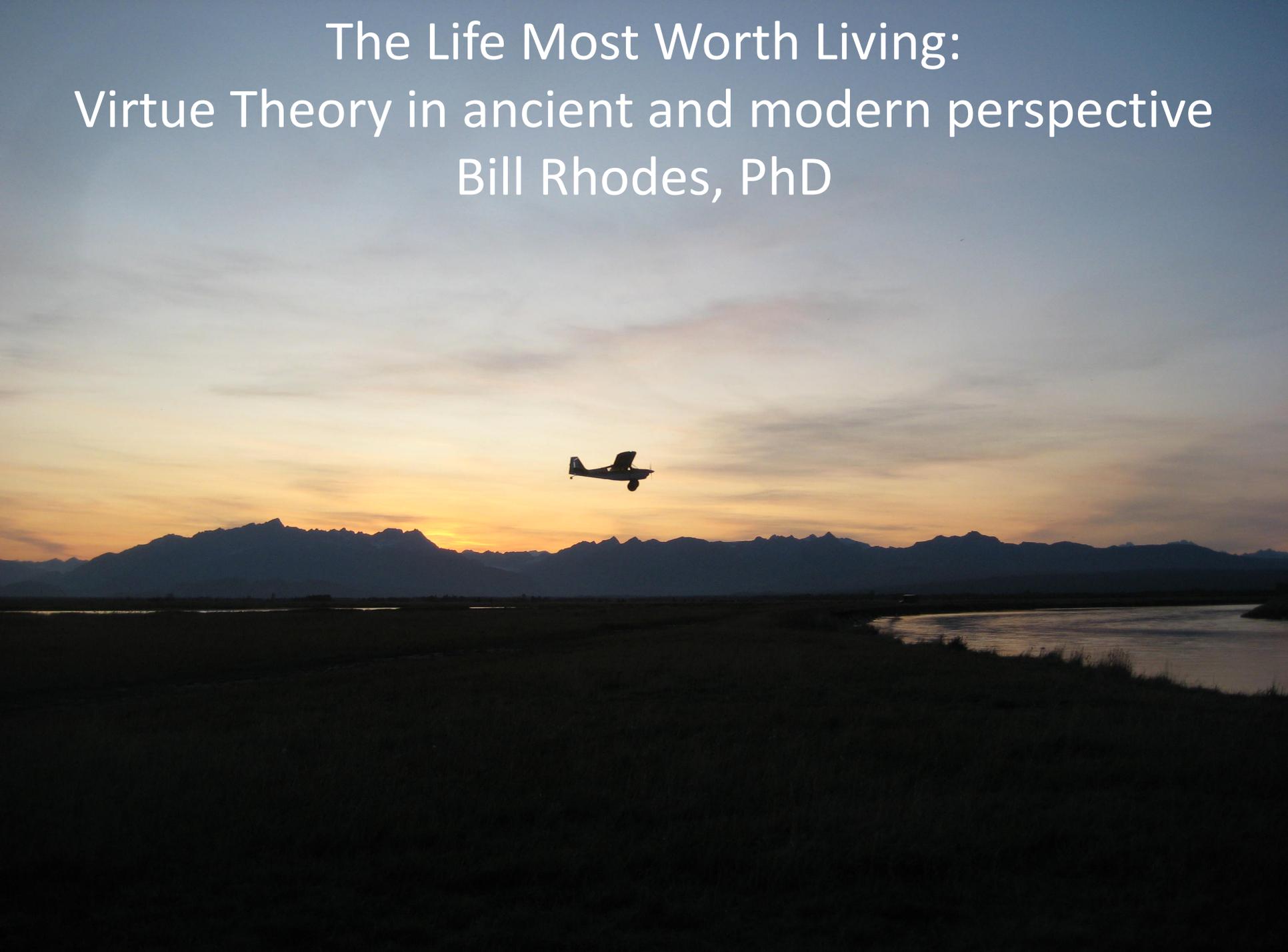


The Life Most Worth Living:
Virtue Theory in ancient and modern perspective
Bill Rhodes, PhD



Philosophy

- Love of wisdom
- One (rough) way to “get located”
 - Natural – what is (no praise or blame)
 - Moral – what ought to be (conscience)
- This course involves both aspects
- And concentrates on practical application

An unavoidable event—no choices



An entirely avoidable mishap Pilot-induced



And another . . .



Branches of Philosophy

- Metaphysics
- Epistemology
- Logic
- Aesthetics
- “Philosophy of . . .”
- Ethics
 - “The normative science of human conduct”

Ethics

- Two generally recognized (and interrelated) branches
- Decision theories -- choosing
 - Deontology
 - Duties, rights; centered on what people deserve
 - Consequentialism
 - Greatest good for the greatest number; centered on happiness
- Virtue theory and the practical question LMWL
 - What sort of person to be?

Ancient Greeks and Liberal Arts

- Socrates (479-399)
- Plato (428-348)
- Aristotle (384-322)
- Free men with time and capacity for philosophy
- Each with a sort of immortality (discussed in some depth later)

Method

- Dialectic – the philosopher’s laboratory
- Logic and discernment
- In Plato, Socrates is generally the protagonist
 - And he’s been told that the wisest of all men knows he does not know.
 - So he asks those who say they do know
 - Elenchus—reveals that beliefs are not always true
 - (Not everyone appreciates elenchus)

Republic - I

- The conversation at the Piraeus
- Polemarchus, Adeimantus, Glaucon, etc.
- “Either prove stronger than we are, or you will have to stay here.”
- A third possibility? Persuasion?
- What if we won't listen?
- OK – go to Polemarchus's house for discussion

Cephalus on Justice

- The old have traveled a road we will probably follow
 - Appetites relax; harmony ensues
 - Fear of death and that “stories are true”
 - Wealth allows speaking truth; keeping promises, repaying debts, etc.
 - But, are these things always just?
 - Should all debts be repaid?

Polemarchus on Justice

- Giving people what they are owed
 - Benefits to friends
 - Harms to enemies
- But, we make mistakes about friends and enemies
- Enter Thrasymachus (like a wild beast)

Thrasymachus

- Justice is the interest of the stronger
 - Rulers are the strongest
 - And they make rules to their own advantage
 - And so justice for the weaker is to obey these rules
- But, suppose the ruler makes rules that are actually contrary to his interests?
 - Obedience results in a contradiction

Ruling as a craft?

- As with breeding horses, or with medicine
 - It benefits others
- (T pretty much changes the subject): Injustice is always more advantageous
 - Unjust gets away with things, pays fewer taxes, etc.
- Those who condemn injustice do so because they fear suffering it

Ruling (and Psyche)

- Taking on others' problems
 - Thoughtful folk resist ruling but,
 - They fear being ruled by others
- And now for a bit of editorial comment
 - Individuals are isomorphic to the polis
 - So, we've been talking about self-rule too

The larger challenge

- Is it better to be unjust or just?
- Can a gang committing injustice operate without justice?
 - A claim about human nature
- Functionality – particular purpose
 - Eyes – to see; ears – to hear
- What of the psyche itself?

Psyche's function

- Deliberating, ruling, “taking care” of stuff
- No other capacity can do this for us
- And it can do so well or poorly
- Depending on how just it is
- But, we never answered the original question:
what IS justice?

Republic - II

- Glaucon takes up the argument
- Investigation of values
 - Instrumental
 - Intrinsic
 - Both
- What sort of good is justice?
 - Most think it is instrumental only
 - Contract theory

Contracts; Ring of Gyges

- Most who behave justly do so because they cannot do otherwise?
- Invisibility—would it change how we behave?
- “Get away” with breaching contract?
- Is it better to
 - Seem just and be unjust?
 - Or to seem unjust and be just?

Next Time

- Understanding the polis, and the psyche