

To Be or Not to Be a Whistleblower: An Ethical Inquiry through Virtue Ethics and Beyond

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Abstract

This paper explores the ethical dimensions of whistleblowing using a virtue ethics framework, supported by consequentialism, deontology, social contract theory, and Dominican values. It analyzes the cases of Curtis Ewbank (Boeing), Rebekah Jones (Florida COVID-19 data), and Babak Babakinejad (MIT Media Lab) to illustrate how moral courage, integrity, and justice influence whistleblowing decisions despite personal and institutional risks. Dominican values—truth, justice, compassion, partnership, and community—help frame whistleblowing as a moral act that connects personal virtue to public responsibility. The paper concludes that whistleblowing, when grounded in ethical character and supported by transparent institutions, is a vital component of moral leadership and social integrity.

Keywords

Whistleblowing, Virtue Ethics, Dominican Values, Moral Courage, Ethical Dilemma

1. Introduction

The importance and criticism of whistleblowers in identifying dangerous, illegal, or unethical practices within organizations is on the rise in today's world. A whistleblower is an individual who provides actionable information to the necessary parties. In other words, legal whistleblowing is defined as providing information where someone possesses a reasonable belief detailing some kind of unlawful practices occurring within an organization to a competent authority having jurisdiction to receive such evidence. From the mechanical domain of aerospace engineering to the realm of academics, healthcare, and government information systems, people have confronted the painful ethical question, "Should I voice my concerns about a wrongdoing or stay quiet for the sake of my career, safety, and

personal life?” The ethical dilemma is what defines whistleblowing, an act so powerful yet so perilous when grappling with the dichotomy of the singular self vs. society, personal allegiance vs. societal truth, and silence vs. true bravery. The aim of this paper is to analyze the phenomenon of whistleblowing from a virtue ethics point of view, integrated with other ethical perspectives like consequentialism, deontology, and social contract theory. It applies the Dominican values of truth, justice, compassion, partnership, and community to determine whether choosing to be a whistleblower constitutes a morally praiseworthy act or whether silence can ever be ethically justified.

The focus of this inquiry centers on a simple but profound question: Why do some morally good individuals choose to blow the whistle while others, equally good, do not? How do these choices diverge among individuals who share common morals when working in situations that seek to quiet down dissent? The ethical dilemma goes beyond reporting improper conduct to establish which responsibilities are primary among employment duties and professional codes and employee relationships alongside public obligations.

To investigate this, the paper examines three high-profile whistleblowers from distinct domains: Curtis Ewbank from the aerospace industry (Boeing), Rebekah Jones from public health (Florida’s COVID-19 data), and Babak Babakinejad from academia (MIT Media Lab). These individuals were selected for their diversity across sectors, the seriousness of the misconduct they exposed, and the national or institutional impact of their disclosures. Their cases represent a wide spectrum of whistleblowing experiences—from threats to human life, to public data manipulation, to ethical complicity in elite institutions. This variety helps prevent selection bias and strengthens the paper’s broader analysis of whistleblowing as a cross-sector ethical phenomenon.

2. Clearly Articulating the Ethical Issue

Whistleblowing brings forth complex ethical challenges as a person balances conflicting obligations and responsibilities of potential harm. The ethical consideration in question is whether employees or insiders have an ethical responsibility to reveal conduct that is immoral, illegal, or poses a threat to safety by organizations, especially when such reporting comes at a personal cost.

The Dominican tradition emphasizes five core values that guide moral decision-making: truth, justice, compassion, partnership, and community.

Truth reflects the pursuit of intellectual honesty, transparency, and fidelity to reality, especially when truth is inconvenient or suppressed.

Justice entails the active commitment to fairness, the protection of rights, and advocacy for those who are wronged or marginalized.

Compassion requires empathetic understanding and a willingness to alleviate suffering, including recognizing the emotional costs borne by both whistleblowers and those affected by wrongdoing.

Partnership highlights mutual accountability, collaboration, and the ethical re-

sponsibilities shared between individuals and institutions.

Community emphasizes belonging, responsibility to the common good, and the idea that individual actions affect and are accountable to the wider social whole.

These values are rooted in the Dominican Catholic intellectual tradition, which seeks to integrate faith, reason, and social engagement in pursuit of the common good (Dominican Association of Secondary Schools [DASS], 2023).

This moral dilemma is very apparent with **Boeing and the 737 MAX tragedies**. Two separate crashes, Lion Air Flight 610 in October 2018 and Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 in March 2019, claimed 346 lives cumulatively. Employees at Boeing had fomented safety issues regarding the MCAS software system well in advance of the accidents. Some of these employees, like engineer Curtis Ewbank, became internal whistleblowers trying to advance safety policy and met with opposition. Others, such as John Barnett, a former quality control supervisor who openly testified on some production's falling standards, reportedly suffered tremendous aversive discrimination and committed suicide.

Boeing, it seems, was told several times but still chose to put profitability and speed-to-market first before fixing life-threatening design flaws. The ethical issue now changes from an institutional one to a more personal concern: When does a personal moral duty override professional loyalty? What is the right course of action when voicing a concern that may not only endanger one's career but also result in alienation, harassment, or psychological trauma?

In contrast, other whistleblowers like Rebekah Jones, who took issue with how COVID-19 was manipulated in Florida, or Babak Babakinejad, who blew the whistle on environmental neglect at MIT, acted with disregard for institutional and personal consequences in the name of public health and environmental advocacy. Each of these individuals demonstrates what can only be described as moral courage. But for each known whistleblower, there are probably dozens who remain silent, not out of collusion, but out of fear, perceived futility, or misplaced allegiance to an all-powerful institution.

3. Conflicting Values, Interests, and Obligations

Before The ethical dilemma is made more complicated with the intersection of multiple systems of values and responsibilities:

1) Integrity vs. Loyalty: Employees are known to feel a sense of loyalty toward their employers and peers, which makes it impossible to turn against the employer's trust even when something bad is happening.

2) Self-preservation vs. Public Good: On the other hand, the self-preservation, safety, and mental health of the whistleblower are often at stake. If something is wrong and misconduct occurs, self-preservation can be harmful to the public.

3) Professional Code vs. Organizational Culture: Within certain professions such as engineering, medicine, or finance, one can find ethical codes of practice that require the reporting of certain unsafe or illegal procedures and practices.

However, organizational cultures often discourage these disclosures.

4) Justice vs. Obedience: There is a conflict of morals when it comes to obeying dominant authority and pursuing justice. When the internal reporting systems are highly biased or flawed, capturing justice becomes rather difficult.

Each of these responsibilities is conflicting. Such dilemmas require responsibility with the ethical reasoning that follows duties (deontology), responsibilities referring to results (consequentialism), reciprocal duty (social contract theory), and, the main approach in this paper, the character and development of one's morals (virtue ethics).

The choice to apply Dominican values to whistleblowing is especially relevant in contexts that emphasize moral character formation, social justice, and the integration of personal virtue with public responsibility. Rooted in a Catholic intellectual tradition, these values prioritize ethical truth-telling, care for the vulnerable, and accountability to the broader human community—making them well-suited for evaluating acts that challenge institutional wrongdoing for the sake of societal good. Unlike frameworks that rely solely on abstract principles or outcome calculations, the Dominican tradition brings a relational and human-centered perspective that considers conscience, integrity, and the well-being of others as inseparable. However, other traditions also offer valuable insights. Confucian ethics, for example, may discourage whistleblowing when it disrupts social harmony or loyalty to authority, while Islamic moral philosophy includes the imperative of *amr bil ma'ruf wa nahi 'an al munkar* (commanding good and forbidding wrong), which supports truth-telling to uphold justice. Similarly, utilitarianism would assess whistleblowing based on its potential consequences for the greatest number, while Kantian deontology would support it as a moral duty regardless of outcome. These perspectives highlight that while cultural and philosophical frameworks differ, many uphold whistleblowing as a moral response to injustice when truth, fairness, and community well-being is at stake.

4. Pertinent Facts, Stakeholders, and Context

To understand the ethical dilemma in its full depth, it is essential to map out the broader context and the various stakeholders affected:

1) Stakeholders:

- Whistleblowers: Individuals facing moral and personal risk in speaking out.
- Companies and Institutions: Whose practices are being questioned or exposed.
- Public/Consumers: Those potentially endangered or misled by institutional misconduct.
- Regulatory Bodies (e.g., FAA, OSHA, CDC): Often the recipients of whistleblower reports.
- Employees and Colleagues: Who can aid or alienate whistleblowers.
- Media and Society at Large: Those who usually embody and sensationalize the story around whistleblowers often portray them as “heroes” or “traitors.”

2) Facts and Context:

- Boeing's whistleblowers reportedly tried to utilize internal reporting mechanisms prior to going public, although their alarms seem to have been ignored by all potential routes.
- MIT, Florida Health, and other institutes have displayed a tendency to protect their public image over transparency.
- In the United States, there is an array of laws designed to protect whistleblowers, such as the Whistleblower Protection Act and various OSHA safeguards. Enforcement and outcomes, however, vary greatly.
- Exposing wrongdoing inflicts severe mental health damage, retaliation, black-listing, and social isolation among peers.
- Surprisingly, and against any common sense logic, the few positive outcomes are often reserved for policy changes or financial penalties imposed on corporations, and even then, years after the fact, and with no material benefit for the whistleblowers.

3) What Is at Stake for Every Stakeholder?

When individuals blow the whistle, multiple interest groups are involved, while different duties, risks, and effects affect them. The analysis of moral responsibilities in whistleblowing depends on determining what each important party stands to gain or lose. The following analysis investigates stakeholders at the whistleblowing level alongside their ethical risks and the social impact they generate.

The Whistleblower

While whistleblowing is often morally celebrated, it is not without serious risks and ethical complications. One significant concern is the potential for false or misguided accusations, whether intentional or based on incomplete understanding of a complex situation. Even well-intentioned whistleblowers may misinterpret data, misjudge motives, or lack the full context needed for fair assessment—leading to unjust reputational harm, internal disruption, or legal consequences for innocent parties. Additionally, the truth in organizational settings is rarely clear-cut; it is often embedded in technical details, conflicting interests, and layers of bureaucracy. Determining what constitutes wrongdoing, especially in cases involving policy ambiguity or moral gray areas, can be difficult. Whistleblowers themselves may also be influenced by personal grievances, stress, or bias, further complicating objectivity. These challenges highlight that while whistleblowing plays a vital role in exposing harm, it must be approached with discernment, responsibility, and robust institutional safeguards to ensure fairness for all involved.

The whistleblower is someone who is most likely to come under pressure due to the consequences of the report made. They stand to lose their well-being and livelihood in their personal and professional lives, which may change for better or worse depending on the fallout.

- **Personal Risk:** The specific risk associated with the whistleblower is exposure to personal retaliation. In the workplace, remaining anonymous often leads to being bullied, losing opportunities for advancement, as well as damage to one's reputation, or in more extreme cases, abuse and violence after the informant's

identity is revealed (Garrick & Buck, 2020). Noted that not every whistleblower suffers from rebound consequences. Depending on organizational climate and social norms, severe client bullying, verbal abuse, intimidation, and even loss of reputation can occur. As a result, there is potential for psychological suffering, diminished earning potential, and enduring professional stasis. Together with legal measures like the Whistleblower Protection Act (WPA) in the US, many of these claimed protections are not guaranteed, and so, in practice, they suffer from reduced esteem and ill-treatment within the working environment even after revealing wrongdoing (Boles et al., 2020).

- **Moral and Ethical Responsibility:** The ethical and moral responsibilities of whistleblowing require people to protect both truth and justice, but such actions repeatedly result in major personal sacrifices for them. According to virtue ethics, moral courage represents an essential virtue that requires people to follow their ethical belief system when their safety is at stake (Deeg & May, 2022). Whistleblowers need to assess whether their responsibility to report wrongdoing exceeds the challenges they will encounter personally.
- **Support and Reconciliation:** An important decision-making factor for whistleblowers consists of external support from organizations like advocacy groups or media outlets. The extent and conditions of external backing depend on the particular elements of the situation. Public support for whistleblowers who report environmental or corporate fraud exists, but it never guarantees them immunity from professional repercussions or the restoration of their professional status.

The Organization (or Institution)

The organization that is the subject of the whistleblowing and is directly affected by the disclosure of misconduct is likely to suffer severe reputational damage, lose considerable finances, and face legal actions that directly affect the organization in question.

- **Reputation and Trust:** There is a deterioration of trust from employees, clients, and the general public once there is a breach of conduct and a scandal surfaces within a company. Numerous studies indicate that corporate misconduct results in the loss of money and damage to the brand (Lin, 2024). The ethical principles that the organization professes become the subject of critical scrutiny, leading to a crisis of confidence among stakeholders.
- **Legal and Financial Consequences:** Aside from the damage to reputation, there is legal misconduct that deals with the disclosure of unethical, unlawful behaviors such as fraud or corruption. For instance, Boeing's 737 Max crisis brought whistleblower safety violation exposures to the forefront, which led the organization to lose billions of dollars in fines and settlements (Chary, 2024). Such legal issues tend to force the organization to make drilling adjustments to their practices and policies, which inflicts great monetary discomfort.
- **Internal Governance and Trust:** Ethical disclosures can modify both the internal management practices and the organizational trust system. Witnessing

ethical breaches from employees and stakeholders can break down the current internal controls practices (Neubauer & Mohr, 2024). Effective leadership becomes more challenging when employee morale declines due to whistleblowing incidents, which damages organizational culture, thus reducing the ability to successfully implement strategic plans. Once ethical wrongdoings become public, they demand substantial alterations in corporate procedures to both build trust and follow the legal framework.

The Public and Society

The public is one of the primary stakeholders in whistleblowing concerns, especially when it deals with public health or safety or any other matters regarding the environment. Society and its members are often jeopardized when corruption, fraud, or negligence is exposed by a whistleblower.

- **Health, Safety, and Environment:** The public is affected directly when environmental and health violations are revealed. For example, healthcare industry whistleblowers can reveal dangers such as the provision of inadequate care to patients accompanied by billing fraud for the services claimed in the statements of accounts (Cypher, 2021). Individuals such as Rebekah Jones, who revealed that Florida was using COVID-19 data for purposes apart from for managing the pandemic, make clear the public's demand for information that can influence their well-being and safety.
- **Social Justice and Accountability:** In upholding justice within society, very few people endeavor to fight injustice when they see institutions break set rules and guidelines and that authority is abused. Corporate abuse and political scandal, if they are revealed, will force people in power to be supervised. Social contract theory states that people owe a debt to the well-being of society, which, together with whistleblowing, provides a system of balance in the society to be just (MacLennan, 2024). Public welfare remains at risk when no checks exist to prevent corporate elite abuse or state administration violations.
- **Trust in Institutions:** Organizational operations must remain open and honest in order for the public to maintain trust in their institutions, including government and corporations and other organizations. The trustworthy practices of organizations depend on whistleblowing, which helps reveal wrongdoings. Whistleblower actions done for the public interest preserve faith in systems that protect societal interests, as noted by Abdulkерim-Osmanovic and Kazic-Cakar (2024).

Third-Party Stakeholders

Outside of the stakeholders, there are other people who are impacted by the whistleblowing event, directly or indirectly. This includes non-profit entities, advocacy groups, businesses, and even the wider social community.

- **Regulatory Bodies and Legal Institutions:** Regulatory entities like the SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) and OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) depend upon whistleblowers to help expose problems within organizational frameworks (Kampourakis, 2021). Reporting vague and

indictable misconduct within industries is essential towards the creation and maintenance of operational systems. Efficient systems require blown whistles to keep order within various sectors.

- Non-profits and Advocacy Groups: Advocacy groups provide support for whistleblowers, assisting in the legal frameworks for visible public dismantling (Onyango, 2021). Apart from this, they also seek to change political factors due to problems pointed out by whistleblowers. This will in turn impact the other stakeholders.
- Business Competitors and Industry Standards: While exposing one company, you could end up exposing informally accepted norms by other companies throughout the industry. With rivals trying to stay afloat, they will have to develop better practices that align with ethical norms. This shifts corporate or competitive standards in the entire industry (Agbor, 2024). The exposed company faces competition from business competitors who maintain ethical standards to win customer trust, thus speeding up a broader societal trend toward transparent and responsible business practices.

5. Ethical Theories and Dominican Values Applied to Whistleblowing

- Use The evaluation of whistleblowing as a good moral choice versus an ethical breach of professional loyalty needs multiple ethical theories for analysis. Multiple ethical systems present distinct ways to reason about morality and separate parts of ethical choice evaluation. It is therefore necessary to analyze whistleblowing using virtue ethics first, with supporting views from consequentialism, deontology, and social contract theory. Dominican values consisting of truth, justice, compassion, partnership, and community function as an ethical framework based on humanist principles and social responsibility for decision-making.

• A. Virtue Ethics: The Primacy of Moral Character

Virtue ethics, as advocated by Aristotle, focuses on the moral agent instead of the consequences of the action or the duty that is to be performed. Rooted in Aristotle, virtue ethics places greater weight on an individual's character and virtues than on moral rules or consequences (Swanton, 2023). Rather, this methodology concentrates on a person's character rather than their actions or the results of those actions. A virtuous person is not simply someone who does the right thing but rather someone who does the right thing for the right reasons and possesses the right dispositions to do so. Essential virtues pertaining to whistleblowing include

- Courage: Readiness to incur risk or danger in the name of moral good.
- Integrity: Congruence between moral belief and corresponding action.
- Justice: Concern regarding fairness and protection of others.
- Prudence: Good judgment in the face of complex situations.
- Honesty: An inclination to tell the truth, even when subjected to pressure.

A whistleblower like Babak Babakinejad, who blew the whistle on MIT's environmental cover-up with their radioactive waste, is the embodiment of an Aristotelian courageous and just person. Even with personal and institutional prestige at stake, Babakinejad acted out of virtue, prioritizing the safety of the MIT community over his career incentives.

On the other hand, those who silently choose to do nothing are lacking one or more of these virtues, not because of a moral flaw but because of hesitancy or conflicting allegiances. Silence is not defended under "virtue ethics"; rather, it is an open invitation for moral scrutiny: it inquires if a person is moving toward some morally commendable ideal. "According to "virtue ethics," there are some ideals like excelling for the greater good or devotion to the greater good, but that can allow for full development of humanity (Badhwar 2022). It is these ideals that we as humans discover, enabling us with great potential to strive towards with contemplation. It also focuses on moral exemplars like Sophie Scholl of the Hitler's German Nazism resistance alongside the White Rose, or in more contemporary times, Frances Haugen, the Facebook whistleblower. These people exemplify virtue and moral courage as well as the integrity to withstand great adversity. According to virtue ethics, whistleblower actions embody personal moral identity as their core value (Garrick & Buck, 2022). Whistleblowing serves to reveal both the present identity and the future self through moral conduct.

- **B. Consequentialism: Evaluating Outcomes and Harm**

Utilitarianism, a form of consequentialism, determines whether an action is ethical and for what reason. Does it lead to the greatest good for the largest number of people? (Sola, 2023). Out of all the possible actions a person can take, he should take the action that has the best consequences. (If the best consequences are brought about by several actions, then any action among those would be termed as right).

- By this reasoning, whistleblowing is ethically acceptable if the good brought to public safety, accountability, and justice is greater than the negative impact brought to the whistleblower and the institution (Olusegun, 2024). In the case of Boeing, had internal concerns regarding the 737 MAX's MCAS system been listened to, 346 lives could have been saved. Here, the moral calculation is obvious; silence can lead to catastrophic consequences. In contrast, speaking up could have prevented tragedy, which justifies the whistleblower's actions.
- Furthermore, the ethics of consequentialism also has other important dilemmas. For example:
 - Will any change result after the disclosure, given that most institutions have a tendency to conceal or postpone change?
 - What if the resulting panic or misinformation is worse than the information revealed?
 - Does personal risk of becoming bankrupt or discontinued serve as an acceptable obstacle for taking action without secure beneficial results?
 - The ethical approach known as consequentialism possesses two contradictory

effects on whistleblowing practices. The system values results as its main priority, yet fails to acknowledge sincere motives or provide a fair assessment of what future outcomes will be.

- **C. Deontology: Duty, Rights, and Moral Rules**

As explained through the lens of Immanuel Kant, deontology places significant focus on moral obligation and a person's duty to follow a universal principle irrespective of the outcome. Deontological ethics maintains that at least some actions are morally obligatory irrespective of the circumstances regarding the welfare of human beings (Chukwuneke & Ezenwugo, 2022). Such ethics are characterized by "Duty for duty's sake," "Virtue is its own reward," or "Let justice be done though the heavens fall." A deontologist holds that certain actions are always right or wrong depending on the moral law. From this perspective:

- Truth-telling is a moral imperative. Not averting harm when one is able to is unethical.
- Whistleblowing is not merely allowed but may be morally imperative in certain positions of responsibility, such as engineers, healthcare workers, or data scientists, whose primary duty is to protect others. In this context, and despite the fact that she was being fired and legally pursued, Rebekah Jones, the Florida data scientist who took issue with the blatant duplication of COVID-19 figures, may be understood as striving to fulfill her "duty" in matters of public health and science. Whistleblowing constitutes an ethical action from a deontological perspective because it maintains conformity with established moral obligations associated with honesty and life protection.
- Deontology, however, can be rigid. The system possesses theoretical shortcomings because it fails to recognize unique elements, including the safety and well-being of those involved (Ateeq, 2024). The system shows limitations through its inflexible nature, which results in conflicts because strictly obeying duties may produce harmful consequences. The ethical system asks people to perform actions based on principles without exceptions, thus creating circumstances that could result in a self-sacrificing ethic for the sake of following rules.

- **D. Social Contract Theory: Mutual Obligation and Institutional Trust**

The theory of social contract explains ethics as part of an unspoken agreement among citizens to observe common values and safeguard their collective interests. It posits that individuals coexist in a society according to an agreement that specifies ethical and political conduct (Sasan, 2021). Some individuals think that if they follow a social contract, they can choose to be moral without being mandated by a higher power. Organizations have a responsibility to ensure the protection of the public good while individuals within the community agree to obey laws and social norms that guarantee the safety and well-being of the community as a whole. Whistleblowing, in this light, can be interpreted as a means of fulfilling a severed obligation. When institutions breach the trust of society with the intent of putting the safety of other people at risk through data fabrication or data suppress-

sion, employees may have a strong moral reason to defend the social contract.

- This is especially pertinent for publicly visible organizations such as Boeing (aviation), MIT (education), and Florida's Health Department (public health). Their social legitimacy hinges on public trust, which depends on openness, responsibility, and serving the people. Whistleblowers try to preserve these principles when internal structures fail as moral guardians. The problem with this theory is that it relies on the existence of goodwill and rational consensus, which might not be available in profit-, secrecy-, or power-driven contexts. In addition, when ostracism is used against whistleblowers, the underlying message is that the social contract is asymmetrical, demanding personal fidelity while alleviating ethical obligation from institutions.

- **E. Dominican Values in Ethical Decision-Making**

The Dominican values of truth, justice, compassion, partnership, and community provide a moral framework that considers the virtue of the individual alongside civil responsibility, which deepens ethical decision-making (Ahmad & Islam, 2024). Such values are useful in healthcare, education, and public service, where whistleblowing is a regular complaint.

- **Truth:** The most fundamental ethical value. Whistleblowers uncover lies and tell truths that are kept hidden. Their actions align directly with this value.
- **Justice:** Defending the rights and suffering burden of institutional malpractice. Whistleblowers pursue not self-justice but justice for the oppressed and deceived.
- **Compassion:** The motivated force behind troubling action is suffering, which may inflict silence. Even so, the accused deserves some measure of compassion for the risk and trauma the whistleblower faced.
- **Partnership:** Whistleblowing highlights a breakdown of partnership. Blowing the whistle means there is a failure of partnership that should be restored.
- **Community:** The sociological perspective of whistleblowing is quite different.
- Whistleblowers give up their community for society and in the name of community well-being. These values help ground abstract theories in real-world relational ethics, emphasizing that whistleblowing is not merely a legal or philosophical issue; it is a human and communal one. The evaluation of whistleblowing as an ethical behavior becomes clear through virtue ethics alongside Consequentialism and Deontology, and social contract theory combined with Dominican values. Under the framework of virtue ethics, one can find the most thorough ethical examination by studying both actions and consequences alongside individual character traits and true intentions. The ethical ideals of the Dominican community strengthen this ethical perspective by emphasizing institutional truth-telling responsibilities and justice-seeking and compassionate behaviors.

Moral Options and Implications

Option 1: Whistleblow Internally (Report Through Official Channels)

This approach incorporates the raising of issues in the case, as with compliance officers, ethics boards, and supervisors within the organization, before going pub-

lic. At face value, this strategy seems to cause the least disturbance and is the most organizationally considerate. **Moral Strengths:** Respects the institution's ability to self-correct, thereby upholding the principle of partnership. Aligns with prudence, a virtue that values wise judgment and calculated risks. Commitment to truth and justice is demonstrated without public exposure. **Potential Limitations:** Many internal systems are organized to guard the institution rather than bring about justice. Retaliation is common for whistleblowers even when reporting through internal channels, such as demotions, isolation, and surveillance. If an issue is urgent, such as a public health concern, internal action may impede crucial interventions. **Case Example:** Some engineers in the Boeing 737 MAX case did try to internally raise concerns, but these warnings were dismissed or downplayed, which greatly contributed to the tragic outcomes. This case showcases the commendable yet ineffective internal whistleblowing in cultures of denial or risk aversion.

Option 2: Whistleblow Externally (Expose the Issue Publicly)

Reaching out to the media, public, or regulators directly is termed external whistleblowing, which usually happens when internal attempts prove futile or when the risks are simply too high to wait. **Moral Strengths:** There is strong alignment with Dominican values of truth, justice, and community. Refers to the virtue of courage, especially in the face of personal loss. Might result in prompt corrective action, policy changes, or increased public attention. **Potential Risks and Costs:** May violate nondisclosure and confidentiality agreements, opening doors to potential legal actions and consequences. Increases the likelihood of severe personal and social consequences like unemployment, mental health problems, legal issues, and professional ostracization. Carries the risk of causing additional damage, such as reputational damage to uninvolved coworkers or public distrust towards vital institutions. **Case Example:** Rebekah Jones's internal attempts at rectifying COVID-19 data were met with dismissal, resulting in her facing external whistleblowing. Although her actions intensified and ignited a nationwide discourse around the issue, she also endured significant repercussions both personally and professionally. This showcases the burden of moral leadership alongside personal hardships.

Option 3: Remain Silent

Choosing to remain silent can result from fear, loyalty, uncertainty, or futility. Regardless, this is a common choice and deserves ethical scrutiny quite intensely.

Moral Justifications: Preserves personal credibility and professional well-being. Upholds institutional silence and organizational order. Might show the trait of steadfastness or belief in change from within. **Moral Challenges:** Violates Dominican principles of truth and goes against the deontological requirement to prevent causing harm. Enables injustice, especially when remaining quiet sustains systemic wrongdoing. Inflicts enduring consequences of moral betrayal, defined as unwanted shame and psychological torment endured by individuals who are aware of inaction yet unable to justify forgiveness for failure to act. **Ethical Eval-**

uation: The virtue ethics approach contends silence is morally justifiable when danger is imminent or when there is no presenting evidence a whistleblower possesses. Regular silence over acts of misconduct within an organization suggests a lack of required bravery and justice and does not exemplify ethical supremacy. Remaining silent might shield an individual but will almost never honor the social contract or the common good.

Option 4: Find Alternative Avenues (Whistleblowing Through Third Parties or Anonymously)

Incorporated in the middle ground is the option to report a complaint anonymously to monitoring agencies, NGOs, or through whistleblower systems, including SecureDrop and protected reporting hotlines. **Ethical Benefits:** Conveys self-protection while informing, hence balancing honesty and discretion. Conceals identity while informing those in charge without facing personal backlash. Works effectively when powerful, traumatic feelings prevent overt action. **Ethical Concerns:** Limits verification, claim follow-up, and dialogue restoration abilities. Perceived as unreliable and spiteful when the source is concealed. Lacks moral exemplar impact; uninspiring without identity revelation. **Virtue Ethics Evaluation:** Justifiable on virtue grounds without support from moral exemplars. Puts forward a partial virtue claim. Justifiable on prudence, demonstrating low moral courage. Acknowledges those in more vulnerable situations, even if ethically questionable.

6. Contextual Factors Influencing Moral Choice

Ethical decisions are not made in isolation. A number of contextual elements define the range of options that can be deemed ethical:

- Social hierarchies (e.g., race, gender, class, position)
- Availability of legal redress (e.g., whistleblower laws or the absence of such laws)
- Sociocultural orientations towards dissent and loyalty
- Family obligations and mental health
- These variables are necessary to address. Contextual moral reasoning tends to overly dominate and impose brutal justice on those who are least able to resist, often termed as martyrdom. Compassion and community, or Dominican values, alongside the need for balance, become salient. It takes moral clarity to know the limits and boundaries within which one acts, which is courage, not the absence of fear.

Case Analysis and Argument

Case 1: Boeing and the 737 MAX Disasters

Boeing 737 MAX accidents in 2018 and 2019 claimed the lives of 346 individuals. Later, it was uncovered that employees and engineers had flagged safety worries regarding MCAS software weeks before the accidents. These warnings, however, were dismissed by senior management. Curtis Ewbank, an engineer at the company, pointed out the safety issues with the software and advocated for better safety systems, claiming that his efforts went to waste. He later became a promi-

ment whistleblower, unveiling the truth in congressional hearings. Ethically, from a deontological approach, claiming his concerns justified stopping further harm to life validated his decision. From a virtue ethics perspective, Curtis transcended organizational boundaries and showcased profound individual values by exhibiting bold, righteous, and honest behavior, which greatly contributed to regulatory change and shone light on the corporation's risk-centered ethos.

Application of Dominican Values:

- Truth: Truth emerges from Ewbank's desire to present factual accuracy while Boeing spreads deceptive information.
- Justice: Through his testimony, Ewbank enhanced worldwide discussions regarding aircraft safety.
- Community: His public statements protected the safety of thousands by acting for both passengers and flying personnel across the globe.
- Evaluation: When limited by institutional power, Ewbank made the ethical choice to blow the whistle, which served as a model of moral conduct. The ethics demonstrate both personal dedication and professional dedication, which prioritize human dignity above all else.

Case 2: Rebekah Jones and the Florida COVID-19 Data

A data scientist for the Florida Department of Health, Rebekah Jones, was removed from her position in 2020 after she refused to "censor" COVID-19 data for political reasons. Following her termination, she developed an independent data platform and claimed the state was censoring the information. Jones' external whistleblowing sparked national media attention and initiated inquiries. Later, she was charged with unwarranted access to state systems, which generated further controversy. Through virtue ethics, Jones' actions are framed as moral courage and truthfulness, particularly due to the risks involved. She has a clear duty under deontological theory to maintain scientific accountability and public health. However, some criticisms from consequentialist perspectives acknowledge the public nature of her method, exposure, and deeply divided opinions about her credibility.

Dominican Values

- Truth and Partnership: Jones remained committed to data transparency, even though institutional partners were not forthcoming.
- Community and Compassion: Her whistleblowing was aimed at protecting the lives of vulnerable citizens of Florida.
- Evaluation: Jones' behavior demonstrates the intricate struggle between revealing the truth and safeguarding one's identity. Although her whistleblowing was ethically justified, the insufficient protective measures available and societal divides make her legacy difficult to navigate. Yet, her actions reflect resolve in upholding moral principles and advocating for justice and public health.

Case 3: Babak Babakinejad and the Fight Against Toxic Culture at MIT Media Lab

In 2019, MIT Media Lab received special scrutiny concerning the donation's

acceptance from convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Babak Babakinejad, a former researcher, publicly accused the institution of ethical complicity and misrepresentation. Though ostensibly non-violent, his actions uncovered profound failures in leadership, moral vision, and systems. Babakinejad wrote open letters that he gave to the media and campaigned for institutional reform. He was ridiculed and cut off socially but maintained his stance around moral accountability. His efforts were framed within virtue ethics. From a deontological standpoint, he bore the duty of confronting survivor and community silencing: witnessing unjust fostered hypocrisy. Undoubtedly, his advocacy led to high-profile resignations and ethically controversial scrutiny of academia in the media.

Dominican Values:

- Truth: Discomforting aspects of compliance and funding towards MIT were highlighted.
- Justice: Spoke on governanceless survivors and ethically prudent leadership.
- Community: Encouraged academic institutions to uphold moral consistency.
- Evaluation: The consequences of Babakinejad’s actions demonstrate a violation of ethics as much larger than direct harm done to people who rely on the reputational trust of institutions. In this, a difference is made.

Comparative Analysis

Across these cases, several moral patterns emerge:

Ethical Dimension	Ewbank (Boeing)	Jones (COVID-19)	Babakinejad (MIT)
Type of Harm	Physical death	Public health	Institutional ethics
Initial Action	Internal report	External whistleblowing	Open letters, public engagement
Key Virtue	Courage	Integrity	Justice
Dominican Focus	Justice, Truth	Compassion, Truth	Truth, Community

All instances demonstrate that whistleblowing depends on specific circumstances. What counts as the “right” action depends on having access to proof and the level of danger that requires attention, alongside the protective measures available. The shared quality among these whistleblowers emerges through their display of ethical virtue within moments of great risk.

7. Personal Argument: To Be a Whistleblower Is to Embody Virtue

In the cases and theories discussed, I argue that embracing whistleblowing in an organization is to live a moral life. Virtue ethics suggests that character and habit bind individuals to seek to be persons of truth, courage, justice, and compassion, rather than following rules or weighing outcomes as mere calculations (Holmes, 2025). This is the search for understanding and living a life of moral character. This character-based approach to morality tends to focus on societal perception. Dominican values provide a comprehensive and communal view of these virtues

not as personal feats but rather as gifts meant to be offered in service to others. It may make sense to remain silent when faced with injustices, but morally it flounders under scrutiny. This silence is self-preserving but devoid of community consideration. In cases where damage occurs or truth is hidden, whistleblowing invites moral pain but is more of a moral obligation.

Critics of whistleblowing state that it is often narcissistic, divisive, or overly idealistic (Bowman & West, 2019). Some people lack fundamental skills or act out of revenge. These concerns certainly warrant consideration. Not all whistleblowers are noble, and not all accusations are balanced. Still, this critique overlooks the moral hope that underscores whistleblowing. It does not seek perfection, but the resolve to uphold basic integrity amidst ambiguity. Additionally, many people who point out the problems do not want notoriety or even to exact revenge; they often encounter social ostracism. If anything, the moral weight of exile ought to force institutions to improve rather than punish those who tell the truth.

8. Moral Formation and Conclusion

Whistleblowing is not just an unexpected act of defiance; it is the result of moral development, a journey through which people obtain the virtues that enable ethical choices and constructive action. Starting from Aristotle and continuing with Aquinas, moral philosophers stressed that virtue is achieved through the accumulation of habits, instruction, and guidance. As noted by Aristotle, moral virtue is the result of repetitive activity. One shows courage by doing courageous acts (Otteson, 2024). Because of this, Curtis Ewbank, Rebekah Jones, and Babak Babakinejad, the whistleblowers, are not likely to have acted ethically due to self-contained reasoning. Instead, the choices they made stemmed from pre-formed dispositions to truth, justice, and integrity. These institutions are schools, workplaces, and places of worship and have far-reaching influence in the community. Sadly, most institutions reward a maladaptive silence by awarding conformists while punishing dissent. Change in this context demands critical self-reflection and strong ethical reasoning in addition to intentional moral development.

When individuals possess a well-developed moral sense, they become capable whistleblowers. Dominican ethical beliefs understand conscience as an objective moral guide that receives its direction from community involvement combined with biblical reading and rational thought analysis. A strong conscience empowers people to handle ethical dilemmas by behaving according to principles which upholding dignity and compassion and justice.

8.1. Educational Institutions as Ethical Incubators

Institutions of higher learning's ethical imperative is to develop students' ethical sensitivity and the capacity for responsible moral leadership. An educational Dominican institution inspired by Veritas utilizes the truth to nurture such principles, which can be cultivated elsewhere. Below are suggestions educational institutions can adopt to improve moral guidance.

1) Ethical Literacy Across the Curriculum: Ethics shouldn't only be the preserve of philosophy or a theology class. Ethically informed reasoning should permeate every area of study like business, nursing, or science. Health science students can address ethical issues related to patient privacy, public health, and resource allocation.

2) Case-Based Learning and Simulations: Students wrestle with complex, multi-faceted issues in reality through simulations and case studies. Students practice ethical decision-making in safe, reflective spaces where they rehearse moral conflicts like those of whistleblower dilemmas.

3) Mentorship and Faculty Modeling: While instructors ought to teach ethics, they need to practice what they teach. Teachers strive to model basic integrity, humility, and social concern in their actions. Mentorship relationships also allow students to explore ethical challenges in dialogue with trusted guides.

4) Cultivating the Courage to Question: Educational organizations must support their students who question established norms or respectfully question authority figures while freely expressing ethical concerns. The practice of cultivating student dissent can be achieved by establishing forums along with protecting academic freedom and by making it clear that dissent represents moral good.

8.2. Organizational Ethics: Building Cultures of Integrity

Aside from education, organizations should develop an ethical culture that appreciates moral courage and supports whistleblowers. Not addressing such considerations usually creates problems for people and for the organization.

1) Protection and Non-Retaliation Policies: Organizations must create adequate frameworks for whistleblower protection that guarantee anonymity, legal aid, and non-retaliation. Such policies are not only mandatory for legal compliance but also for upholding ethical standards of a society.

2) Ethics Training and Values Integration: Typically, ethics training is mandatory on a yearly basis but not viewed as a value-adding endeavor. It is an expectation that the training is engaging, interactive, scenario-based and aligned with the core values of the institution. Employees need to be forced to deal with the concepts of loyalty, harm, and moral action.

3) Leadership by Example: Organizational leaders are the ones who define the moral standing of the organization. Cultures that shed blame on whistleblowers rarely exist because in a culture where leaders admit their mistakes and listen to what people tell them, whistleblowing becomes a mark of loyalty. Unlike betrayal, it is drawn as loyalty to the truth.

8.3. Societal Implications: Whistleblowing as Public Witness

In societies that observe democracy, whistleblowers are protectors of accountability and truth. They constitute a form of control over power and remind everyone from enterprises to governments that it is not acceptable to trade truth for convenience or profit. Society branding and marketing is not the only area that re-

quires a paradigm shift; literature about whistleblowers should transform. Mankind should not demonize this selfless service; instead, restore dignity to speak. The way whistleblowers tell their story is captured in media, political debate, and education. A whistleblower should be in protective arms where they are safeguarded and nurtured.

8.4. Final Reflection: To Be or Not to Be a Whistleblower?

Circling back to the question that this paper seeks to address, “*to be or not to be a whistleblower*,” the analysis confirms that to be a whistleblower is to act in compliance with the utmost moral standards. It is a decision that frequently comes at a personal loss, but one that maintains the dignity of people and the integrity of systems. Still, the choice is never simple. It is not simple because it requires, at the very least, wisdom, courage, and the backing of a morally sound group. As demonstrated in the previous chapters of this paper, whistleblowing is morally justifiable only when it is motivated neither by revenge nor by narcissism, but rather by a personal character etched in justice, compassion, truth, and love for the collective well-being of society.

Whistleblowing within the frameworks of Dominican values and virtue ethics is more than a form of protest; it is a deep witness to moral deeds. This paper reveals, through the application of various normative ethical theories and case studies, that those who challenge authority do so not only legally but morally. Their courage calls each individual to reflect: what am I becoming? And when the moment presents itself, will I be able to act for what is right, even in solitude? Ultimately, moral courage is not one elusive act of heroism; it is a consistent practice. In order to authentically and justly navigate a world riddled with silence, we must all hone this virtue.

9. Limitations

This paper is conceptual in scope and does not include empirical data or field research. Its arguments are based on ethical theory and case analysis rather than direct observation or statistical evidence. As such, the applicability of the virtue-based framework, particularly the integration of Dominican values, remains untested in real-world organizational settings. Future research should empirically examine how these ethical frameworks influence actual whistleblowing behavior and outcomes across different industries and institutional cultures.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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