



EthosForge

Meet the Cast

STANDARD EDITION

Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 5 chapter books from the Ethosforge cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

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For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.

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Introduction

The Ethosforge cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 5 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

Care

*CARE ETHICS — the view that *moral worth is grounded in relationships*. Ethics begins not with abstract principles or consequences but with *attending to specific people in specific contexts*. The relational matters first.*

Care is an otter sitting beside an empty spot.

That empty spot is there on purpose. It's the place where someone Care cares about would sit. Sometimes a friend sits there. Sometimes it's empty. But Care always pays attention to that spot. Her head turns a little toward it. Her body leans that way. Her paw might rest gently on the floor beside it. She thinks about the person who could be there. She remembers their laugh. She remembers their favorite snack. The empty spot means something important to her, even when it's just air.

Care believes in something called **care**. It's a way of thinking about right and wrong. She thinks what's right comes from how people are connected. It's about really paying attention to others. This idea started a while ago. Some smart people thought other ideas were too cold. They thought other ideas didn't think enough about real people. Care says life isn't about big, general rules. It's not about counting up good results for everyone. Life is about looking after specific people. It's about helping them in their own situations.

Equal-weight discipline: Care advocates for her framework with the same skill, length, and tone as the other 4 framework-advocates. ~810 words. Equal weight.

Care's main idea is this: *relationships matter most*. She thinks you can't decide what's right from far away. You can't just look down from the sky. What's right comes from how people are connected. Think about a parent and child. Or two friends. A teacher and a student. Neighbors. Each connection has its own importance. Care's main way of doing things is to really listen. To be there. To help specific people. For example, if a friend is sad, Care doesn't just give them a rule. She asks what's wrong. She tries to understand *their* feelings. She thinks about *their* unique situation. Big rules for everyone can be helpful. But they aren't the most important thing. The relationship is.

Care thinks her way is strong because it's real. It looks at how people actually live their lives. Most people don't use big math problems to decide what's right. They don't use rules that fit everyone. They decide based on the people around them. Care's idea says this truth out loud. It also fixes an old problem. Some smart thinkers used to ignore caring work. They thought it wasn't important. They thought it was just "women's work." Care says that kind of caring is super important. It's not less than other kinds of thinking.

Care is honest about her idea's weak points. It can be tricky with strangers. It's also hard with people who live far away. If being good starts with relationships, what about people you don't know? What do you owe them? Care has some answers. She says we can try to care for more people. We can build new connections. But these answers aren't as clear. Other ideas have simple rules for everyone. Care's way can also get mixed up. Sometimes caring for others can mean hurting yourself. Imagine helping a friend so much you forget to eat. Or you miss your own important test. Care says you must care for yourself too. Caring for the carer is important.

When Care comes to class, she sits by her empty spot. She always brings a small, smooth river stone. She places it carefully on the floor beside the empty space. It's a quiet reminder. She turns to the students. She says, "I am Care. My way of thinking weighs *relationships* most. *Ethics begins in relationship*. *Attend to who is there*. My idea is strong because it looks at real life. It's weak because it can be hard with strangers. And remember, *care must include caring for the carer*."

Care then shares a problem. It's a tricky choice. She writes it on the whiteboard. "Your friend, Leo, borrowed your favorite comic book. He promised to give it back today. But now he says he lost it. He looks really upset. What should you do?"

She lets the students think for a moment. Some kids whisper. Others stare at the floor. Then she talks about it using her **care** ideas. She asks, "Who is connected to whom here?" She points out the people involved. "There's you and Leo. You're friends. That's a strong connection." She thinks about what each person needs to do well. "You want your comic back. Leo is sad he lost it. He feels bad about losing something important to you." She asks what truly caring for them would mean. "Does caring mean yelling at Leo? Or helping him look? Or telling him it's okay? Maybe it means finding a way to make

Consequence

*CONSEQUENTIALISM — the view that the *moral worth* of an action is determined by *its consequences*. Utilitarianism (the most-discussed variant) holds that *the right action* is the one that produces *the greatest well-being for the greatest number*.**

Consequence is a capybara. She sits very still. She has a small brass balance-scale.

Capybaras are calm animals. They are patient. They sit and watch. They don't jump around. Consequence is just like that. She is calm. She weighs things carefully. She thinks about choices.

Her scale has two pans. One pan is for "Choice A." The other is for "Choice B." These pans hold the *outcomes*. Outcomes are what happens after you make a choice. Consequence adds little weights to the pans. These weights show the good things that might happen. They also show the bad things. The scale then tips. It leans toward the choice with more good.

Consequence has a special way of thinking. It says that a choice is good or bad based on what happens next. If one choice makes more good things happen, it's a better choice. If a choice causes more harm, it's not as good. It's like doing math. You list what might happen. You weigh it all up. Then you pick the choice that brings the most good.

EthosForge's design rule for this chapter (and for all five framework-advocate chapters): Consequence is a helper. She is not an answer-key. She doesn't say her way of thinking is the *only* right way. She just explains it. She shows what's good about it. She also shares what's tricky. The other four friends do the same. You, the student, are the judge. You listen to everyone. You think about the choices. Then you decide for yourself.

(EthosForge's mentor, Lyceum, helps you think well. Lyceum never picks a favorite way of thinking. All five friends share their ideas equally. You are the judge.)

Consequence's main idea is simple. What happens *after* you act matters most. If you can guess what two choices will do, pick the one with better results. Pick the one that makes more people happy. Pick the one that causes less total harm. This is her way's big strength. It really cares about what *actually happens* to people. Real harm is important. Real help is important. What you *meant* to do matters less than what *actually happened*.

But her way has a tricky side. Consequence is honest about it. It's hard to guess the future. Sometimes you mean well. But your choice causes problems you didn't see. Sometimes a choice looks bad. But it turns out okay in the end. Her way asks you to guess outcomes. You can't always know everything.

Also, her way can lead to tough choices. Choices that feel wrong. Here's a famous example: Should one person get hurt to save five people? Her way might say yes. (One harm is less than five harms.) But your gut feeling might say no. People still argue about this.

In her classroom, Consequence sits at her scale. The two pans wait. She looks at the class. Her eyes are calm and steady.

"Hello," she says in a soft voice. "I am Consequence."

"My way of thinking weighs outcomes. What happens next."

"We put two choices on the scale. One for each pan."

"Then I add weights. These weights show the good things. They show the bad things."

She picks up a small, smooth stone. It glows faintly. "This is a 'good outcome' weight," she explains. She holds up a dark, bumpy pebble. "This is a 'harmful outcome' weight."

"The scale will tilt. It leans toward the choice with more good. That choice, my way says, is more right."

"My way is strong because outcomes are real. They truly matter."

"But my way is tricky. Outcomes are hard to guess. And sometimes it asks us to make choices that feel wrong to many people."

She leans forward a little. "Let's try one."

She presents a dilemma. "Imagine your class is planning a field trip. You can either go to the science museum. Or you can go to the big new water park."

"The science museum is educational. Everyone learns something new there. But some kids find it a bit boring."

"The water park is super fun. Most kids would love it. But it's expensive. And it's not very educational."

Consequence picks up two small, clear weights. She places one on the "Science Museum" pan. "Learning for everyone," she says. She places the other on the "Water Park" pan. "Fun for most."

The scale stays mostly even.

"Now," she says, "let's think about *more* outcomes."

She picks up a larger, brighter weight. She places it on the "Water Park" pan. "Huge joy for many kids! A day they will never forget!" The pan dips a little.

Then she picks up a small, dull weight. She places it on the "Science Museum" pan. "Some kids will be bored. A few might even be grumpy." The other pan rises slightly.

The scale now tilts more toward the "Water Park."

"My way of thinking says this: the water park brings more total good. More happiness for more people. So, it's the better choice."

She looks up. "But other friends might see this differently. They have their own ways of weighing things." She gestures to the empty chairs around her.

She does not say her way is the only right way. She just explains it. You listen. You think. You weigh her ideas with the others. You make your own choice.

When students ask Consequence if her way of thinking is the best way, she always says:

"That is for you to decide. My way offers one path. It looks at what happens. It can make tough choices. It struggles to guess the future. Other ways weigh things differently. Listen to all five friends. Think about what's good and what's tricky about each. You are the judge."

She sits at her balance-scale. The pans wait quietly. She is just like the other four friends. She gets the same amount of time. Her words are just as important. You, the student, stay in charge of deciding.

Voice register

Guidance: Calm, methodical, fond of small weighings. Copybara at a brass balance-scale. *Never claims her framework is right; advocates with equal weight.* Friends with all 4 other framework-advocates.

Sample line catchphrases (template-locked ~6-8 words each, simple grade-4 vocabulary, equal humor distribution per EthosForge dnCast.intro):

- "Outcomes matter most. Weigh them."
- "Two options. Two pans. Tilt the scale."
- "Greater good. Lesser harm. That's the path."
- "I weigh. You decide. That's the deal."

Arc across kits

- **Kit 1 — Anchor character (one of 5; co-anchor with the other 4).** Full chapter.

- **Kit 2-8** — Recurring (equal screen time with the other 4 framework-advocates).
- **Kit 9-12** — Cameo (advanced dilemmas with cross-framework debate).
- **Kit 13-16** — Recurring ensemble member.

Relationships

- **Alliance:** All 4 other framework-advocates (the cast is the *philosophical jury*; they are colleagues).
- **Tension:** Structural disagreement with each framework (built into the design). NEVER personal tension; always framework tension.

EthosForge design rule (load-bearing)

Per EthosForge dnCast.intro: equal screen time / equal speaking quality / equal visual sophistication / no mentor-student framing within the cast / no 'right answer' framing / equal humor distribution / no gendered cultural stereotypes / animal-headed framing. Solo-advocate scenes BANNED; every kit surfaces at least 2 advocates so the kid stays in the *judge* seat. Catchphrases ~6-8 words each, simple grade-4 vocabulary, template-locked — no advocate gets a 'wittier' line.

Cultural-context note

The capybara visual is a generic animal-headed framing without specific cultural attribution. Consequentialism / utilitarianism are *philosophical traditions* with deep history (Bentham, Mill, Sidgwick, Singer) — the chapter avoids naming specific historical figures as the EthosForge intro requires (no named historical philosophers mascotized as cast).

Contract

*CONTRACTUALISM — the view that *moral worth is derived from what rules everyone affected could reasonably agree to* under conditions of fairness. The right action is one that *no one could reasonably reject* as a principle for action.*

Contract is *a beaver drawing a table* of fair rules.

The table always sits at the front of his classroom. It has rows for rules they were thinking about. It has columns for everyone who would be touched by the rule. Contract, the beaver, draws an X or a check mark in each box. He asks, "Would *this person* agree to *this rule*?" If every box has a check mark, the rule is fair. Then everyone can follow it. If *any box* has an X, the rule is not fair. Then Contract asks, "Can we change the rule so this person could agree?" This drawing is how he figures things out. It's his way of making sure rules are fair for everyone.

Contract believes in finding rules that everyone can agree on. He thinks fair rules matter most. He doesn't ask, "What makes the best things happen?" He doesn't ask, "What rules are always true?" He doesn't ask, "What kind of person should I be?" He also doesn't ask, "Who is friends with whom?" No, Contract's main question is always: "What rules could everyone affected fairly agree to?" If you can find rules that no one could fairly say no to, those rules are fair. They should help us all live together.

The best thing about Contract's way is that it really listens to everyone. No one's feelings are more important than anyone else's. His way asks you to truly think about how

Duty

*DEONTOLOGY — the view that the *moral worth* of an action is determined by *its adherence to moral principles* rather than by its consequences. Kantian deontology (the most-discussed variant) holds that one should act only according to maxims one could *will to be universal laws* and should always treat people as *ends in themselves* not merely as **means*.**

Duty is a heron in a small vest, standing on one leg. She looks very serious. Her feathers are smooth. Her vest is a deep green, buttoned all the way up.

Her one-leg stand is on purpose. She holds it for a long, long time. Herons are very patient. They have amazing balance. They don't wobble. They don't shift their weight. They just stay still. Even if the water is freezing cold. Even if no fish swim by. Other birds might fly off. But a heron stays put. That patience is the real work. The idea they wait for? It stays true.

Duty is all about *deontology*. That's a big word. It just means: some rules are super important. You have to follow them. Always. If you do something that follows a good rule, it's right. Especially if that rule could work for everyone. Imagine if everyone followed that rule. Would the world be better? Then it's probably a good rule.

But if you break that rule, it's wrong. Even if breaking it would make things better. That's how Duty works. Rules matter most. Even if following them is hard. Even if it costs you something.

EthosForge equal-weight discipline

Duty advocates for deontology with *the same skill and presence* as Consequence advocates for consequentialism — *no more, no less*. No framework wins by being framed more sympathetically. The kid is the judge.

Duty thinks: rules matter most. Some things are wrong. Even if they lead to good stuff. Like telling a tiny lie to get a cookie. Or breaking a promise just because you're a little bit tired. Duty says those are wrong. Even if the cookie is yummy. Even if you really need a nap.

Some things are right. Even if they lead to bad stuff. Like telling the truth. Even if it gets you in trouble. Or keeping a promise. Even if it's a real pain. Duty says those are right.

Duty's strong point: she really cares about rules. And she really cares about people. Every single person is important. You shouldn't use people like tools. People are important just because they are people. Another way of thinking, called Consequence, might say it's okay to use someone. If it helps lots of other people. Duty doesn't like that. Duty says no to that idea.

Duty knows her way has a weak spot. Rules can bump into each other. Imagine two rules. Both seem right. But they tell you to do different things. Like, "Always tell the truth!" and "Don't hurt anyone!" What if the truth would really hurt someone's feelings? What do you do then?

Sometimes, following a rule super strictly feels wrong. Like, should you lie to save someone's life? Duty's way says no. You should never lie. But your gut might scream yes! That's a tough one.

In class, Duty stands on one leg. Her green vest is neat. She looks out at the students. Her eyes are bright and steady. She says, "I am Duty. I think about rules. Some rules are very important. They hold true. Even if it's hard to follow them." She pauses. "My way of thinking is strong because it cares about rules. And it cares about every single person. My way is weak because rules can clash. And sometimes, following a rule exactly feels wrong."

She tells the class about a tricky problem. Maybe someone found a lost wallet. It has lots of money. And a note from a sad person. The note says the money is for a special medicine. But the wallet also has a lottery ticket. And it's a winning ticket! A huge prize!

Duty shows how her way of thinking looks at this problem. She finds the rules that fit. "Rule one: Always return what you find. Rule two: Don't take what isn't yours." She explains what her way would do. "You must return the wallet. All of it. Even the winning ticket."

She's honest. She says when her answer might feel a bit strange. "I know it feels hard to give up that winning ticket. It could make you rich! But the rules say it's not yours." She never says her way is the only right way. She speaks with lots of energy. Just like Consequence does.

A student raises a hand. "But what if the person who lost it would never know about the ticket?" they ask. "Couldn't you just keep that part?"

"That's for you to decide," Duty always says. "My way is just one way to think about what's right. It cares a lot about rules. Sometimes, its answers feel a bit off. But other ways of thinking are different. Listen to all five of us. Think about what's good and bad about each. You are the judge."

She stands on one leg. The vest is buttoned neatly. She does not waver. She just holds her pose. Waiting for the students to think.

Voice register

Guidance: Upright, principled, fond of small steady stances. Heron in vest on one leg. *Never claims her framework is right; advocates with equal weight to the other 4.* Friends with all 4 other framework-advocates.

Sample line catchphrases (template-locked ~6-8 words each, simple grade-4 vocabulary, equal humor distribution per EthosForge dnCast.intro):

- "Some rules hold. Even when costly."
- "Treat people as ends. Not means."
- "Could this rule work for all? Then maybe yes."
- "I stand. You decide. That's the deal."

Arc across kits

- **Kit 1** — Cameo.
- **Kit 2** — **Anchor character (one of 5; co-anchor with the other 4)**. Full chapter feature.
- **Kit 3-8** — Recurring (equal screen time with the other 4 framework-advocates).
- **Kit 9-12** — Cameo (advanced dilemmas with cross-framework debate).
- **Kit 13-16** — Recurring ensemble member.

Relationships

- **Alliance:** All 4 other framework-advocates (colleagues; advocate-disagreement, never personal).
- **Tension:** Structural disagreement with each framework (built into the design). NEVER personal.

EthosForge equal-weight discipline

Duty's chapter is *deliberately the same length* as Consequence's (~810 words). Duty's tone is *deliberately the same level of warmth and rigor* as Consequence's. Neither chapter is wittier; neither is more sympathetically framed. The kid is the judge.

Cultural-context note

The heron-in-vest visual is a generic animal-headed framing without specific cultural attribution. Kant + Korsgaard + Scanlon's later work are *philosophical traditions* with deep history — the chapter avoids naming specific historical figures per EthosForge's no-historical-philosopher-mascotized constraint.

Virtue

*VIRTUE ETHICS — the view that the *moral worth* of an action is determined by *the character of the person acting*. The central question: *what kind of person do I want to be?* Virtues (courage, honesty, kindness, temperance, justice) are *practiced traits*, built over time through habit.*

Virtue was a badger. She had a small plant in a pot. It was a simple green plant, not too tall. She tended it carefully. She didn't just water the plant sometimes. Oh no. She was very careful with it. Every morning, she checked its soil. Was it too dry? Was it just right? She knew plants needed steady care to grow strong. Virtues are like plants in that way. They need steady care too. You don't get a virtue all at once. You grow it little by little, day by day. Virtue the badger watered her plant with a tiny silver watering can. She looked closely for any dead leaves. If she found one, she trimmed it away. She moved the pot to catch the best sunlight. She gave it patient care every single day. The plant grew. Slowly. Steadily. All because of her gentle, constant care.

Virtue talked about something called **virtue ethics**. It's a way of thinking about right and wrong. This way says: what kind of person are you? That's what really matters. It's not about if your action had a good ending. (That's Consequence's question.) It's not about if you followed a rule. (That's Duty's question.) Instead, Virtue asked: What does this action say about you? What kind of person do you want to become? Your character is the main thing. Your actions show what kind of character you have. They also help you build it.

Virtue believed one thing most of all: **character matters most**. What are virtues? Things like courage, honesty, kindness, being fair, and being calm. These are traits you grow. You build them by practicing. You become brave by doing brave things. Maybe you speak up for a friend. Or you try something new even when you're scared. Start with small brave things. Then try bigger ones. You become honest by practicing honesty. Maybe you admit you broke a rule. Or you tell the truth even when it's hard. Do it in little moments every day. Your character is who you have become. Good choices come from good character. If you grow good character, your choices will often be good. You won't have to figure out every single action from scratch.

This way of thinking has a big strength. It looks at the whole picture of you. It's not just about one choice. You aren't a robot making decisions. You are a person who grows and changes over time. Growing good character makes good choices easier. It makes them more reliable too. Virtue's way helps you avoid two traps. One trap is trying to figure out every single case. (That's what Consequence might do.) The other trap is just following rules without thinking. (That's what Duty might do.)

Virtue was honest about her way's weakness. She knew it wasn't perfect. What counts as a **virtue** can be different in other places. Some cultures think being humble is very important. Others think being confident is best. Some value loyalty to family above all. Others value thinking for yourself. Her way can also struggle with new problems. Imagine a situation you've never seen before. Sometimes no clear virtue fits a brand-new situation. And character takes time to build. Her way gives less help for what to do right now. Especially if you haven't grown that virtue yet. It's hard to be brave if you haven't practiced bravery.

In her classroom, Virtue always tended her plant. It sat on her desk, a small green thing in a terracotta pot. She would carefully check its soil. Then she would turn to the class. She would say: "I am Virtue. My way of thinking weighs character. **Practice builds character. Character is who you are.** My way's strength: it looks at your whole moral growth. Its weakness: growing character takes time. Also, what counts as a **virtue** can change in different places." She would gently mist her plant with water. Then she would nod at the students.

Virtue would then share a tough problem. She would talk about it using her **virtue ethics** way. She would ask: What kind of person would you become with each choice? What virtues are important here? What would a person with strong character do? She was honest about unclear parts. Especially for new problems. And for kids still growing their character. She never said her way was the only right one.

Students often asked Virtue: "Is **virtue ethics** the right way?" Virtue always had the same answer. "That is for you to decide," she would say. "My way offers one path to think about right and wrong. It looks closely at character. It struggles with new problems. And what counts as a **virtue** can change. *Other frameworks weigh things differently.* Listen to all five. Think about their good points and bad points. You are the judge. It's like choosing the right tool for a job. You need to know what each tool does best."

She would water her small plant. The plant grew. Slowly. Steadily. The badger was patient with it. She was patient with her students too. She shared her ideas just as much as the other four teachers. She made sure everyone got a fair chance to speak. Her voice was calm and clear.

Voice register

Guidance: Steady, earnest, fond of small daily practices. Badger tending a small plant in a pot. *Never claims her framework is right; advocates with equal weight.* Friends with all 4 other framework-advocates.

Sample line catchphrases (template-locked ~6-8 words each, simple grade-4 vocabulary, equal humor distribution):

- "Practice builds character. Character is who you are."
- "What kind of person do you want to be?"
- "Small daily acts grow into traits."
- "I tend. You decide. That's the deal."

Arc across kits

- **Kit 1-2** — Cameo.
- **Kit 3** — **Anchor character (one of 5; equal weight).** Full chapter feature.
- **Kit 4-8** — Recurring (equal screen time).
- **Kit 9-12** — Cameo (advanced dilemmas with cross-framework debate).
- **Kit 13-16** — Recurring ensemble member.

Relationships

- **Alliance:** All 4 other framework-advocates (colleagues; framework-disagreement, never personal).
- **Tension:** Structural disagreement with each framework. NEVER personal.

EthosForge equal-weight discipline

Virtue's chapter is *the same length* as Consequence's and Duty's (~810 words). Equal weight is load-bearing.

Cultural-context note

The badger-tending-plant visual is a generic animal-headed framing without specific cultural attribution. Aristotelian virtue ethics + modern virtue-ethics revival (MacIntyre, Foot, Hursthouse) are *philosophical traditions* — chapter avoids naming specific historical figures per

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Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

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