



Caleb Holonko – Lights Out

Business, Ethics and Excellence in Action Sports

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Webinar at

Ted Rogers School of Management
Toronto Metropolitan University

Institute for the Study of Corporate Social
Responsibility

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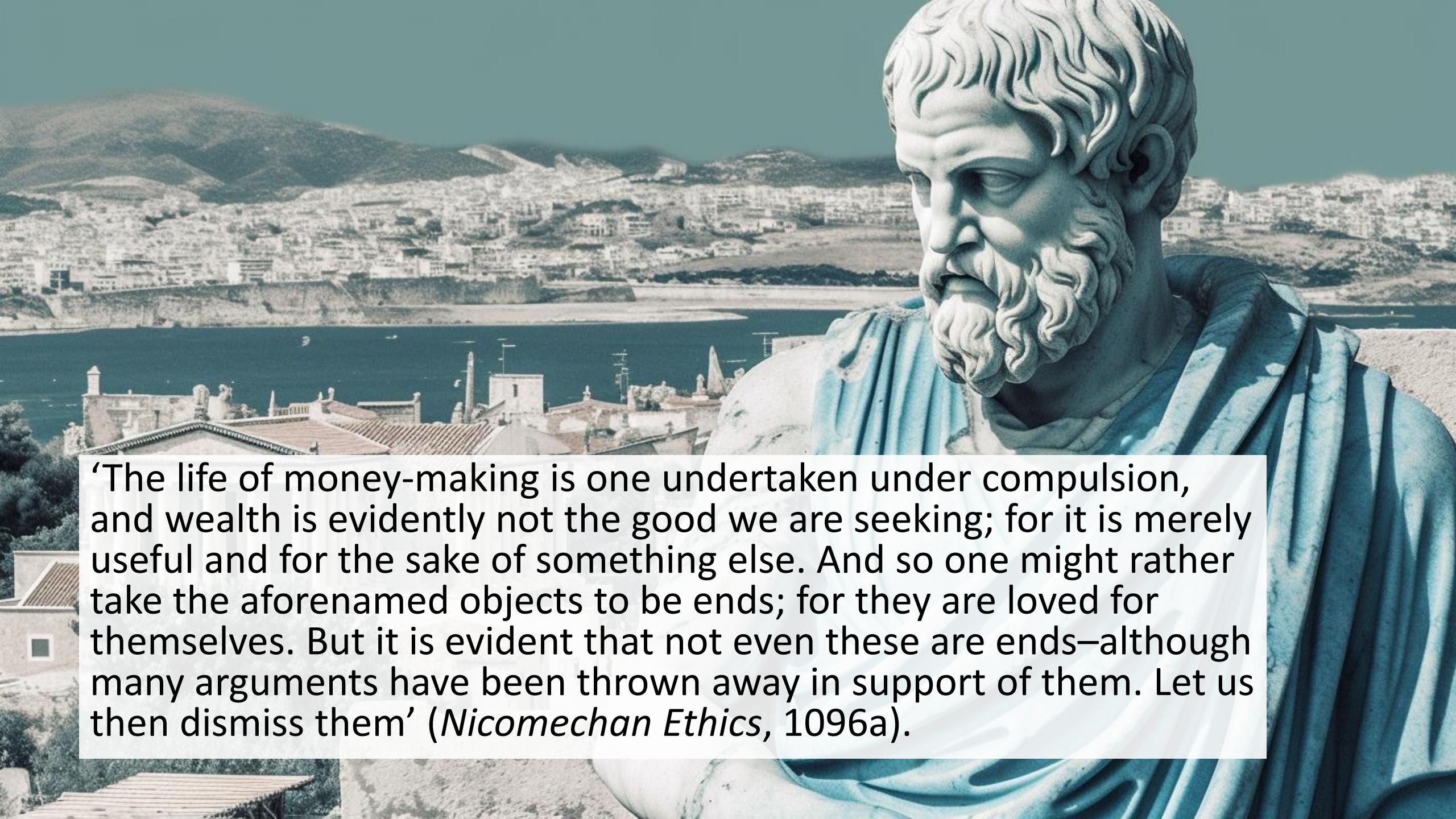


A wide-angle photograph of a city plaza. In the foreground, a skateboarder is captured mid-air, performing a trick on a concrete ledge. The background features a mix of architectural styles, including a prominent clock tower on the left and several modern skyscrapers. The sky is overcast with some clouds.

Overview

- (Anti-)Business virtue ethics
- Internal and external goods
- Action sports and the external goods motive to create and commence practices
- Excellence in action sports
- The Social Media Surfer
- Broader concerns

(Anti-)Business Virtue Ethics



‘The life of money-making is one undertaken under compulsion, and wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else. And so one might rather take the aforesigned objects to be ends; for they are loved for themselves. But it is evident that not even these are ends—although many arguments have been thrown away in support of them. Let us then dismiss them’ (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1096a).

A black and white profile photograph of Alasdair MacIntyre. He is an elderly man with grey hair, wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt. He is looking slightly to his left with a thoughtful expression. His right hand is raised, with his fist clenched, while his left hand rests on his lap, holding a pair of glasses.

Alasdair MacIntyre

- Has equated business ethics with astrology
- Thinks that managers cannot engage in moral debate
- Considers corporations to be « an embodied excuse for irresponsibility »
- Is against the « social, economic, and political order of advanced modernity »

(MacIntyrean) Practices

Comprised of two elements:

1. A specific form of excellence/set of complexly intertwined internal goods
2. A community of (exclusive) practitioners

Business ethicists (controversially) suggest that modern businesses often involve practices



The MacIntyrean Orthodoxy

1. **Tradition:** MacIntyre proposes that practices always have traditions, and fears the idea of a « democratized self » with « no necessary social identity »
2. **Institutional Corruption:** Institutions (e.g., corporations) are a sort of necessary evil. They are created after the emergence of practices, and are meant to protect them. But their external good motivations can undermine excellence in practices.
3. **Internal over External Goods:** The motive to internal goods is the source of excellence in practices, whereas the motive to external goods tends to prevent excellence being realised

Internal and External Goods

Internal Goods

Are exclusive to individual practices

- “Can only be identified and recognized from the experience of participating in the practice in question”.

For example:

- “a certain highly particular kind of analytical skill” for chess; and
- “the good of a certain kind of life” for portrait painting
- ‘the love of the game’

(*After Virtue*: 188-191).

External Goods (and Bads)

Are realizable through any number of (non-)practice activities:

They include:

- Prestige
- Status
- Money
- Winning

*A key reason that institutions can corrupt practices is, according to MacIntyre, because they are necessarily concerned with external goods such as money and status

For MacIntyre...

The motive to internal goods:

- is inseparable from excellence
- is essential to the prospering of practices
- can lead to, but will often prevent, external goods being realised

The motive to external goods:

- is inconsistent with the fullest realisation of excellence
- tends to undermine practices
- prevents internal goods being fully realised by individual practitioners

In contrast, I propose that the motive to external goods is arguably superior to the internal goods motive when it comes to:

- encouraging the fuller realisation of internal goods
- realising practical excellence
- explaining the creation and development of practices

Reconsidering the value of external goods

Reason 1

MacIntyre suggests that people motivated by external goods (e.g., winning) are less dedicated to a specific practice because they can freely pick and chose where they want to realize external goods.

In doing so, MacIntyre fails to note that humans are:

1. mortals that need to manage time scarcity; and
2. (very) limited in terms of their capacities

Any given human (that is motivated by external goods) will thus only have the time and capacity to prove capable, let alone excellent, in relatively few practices.

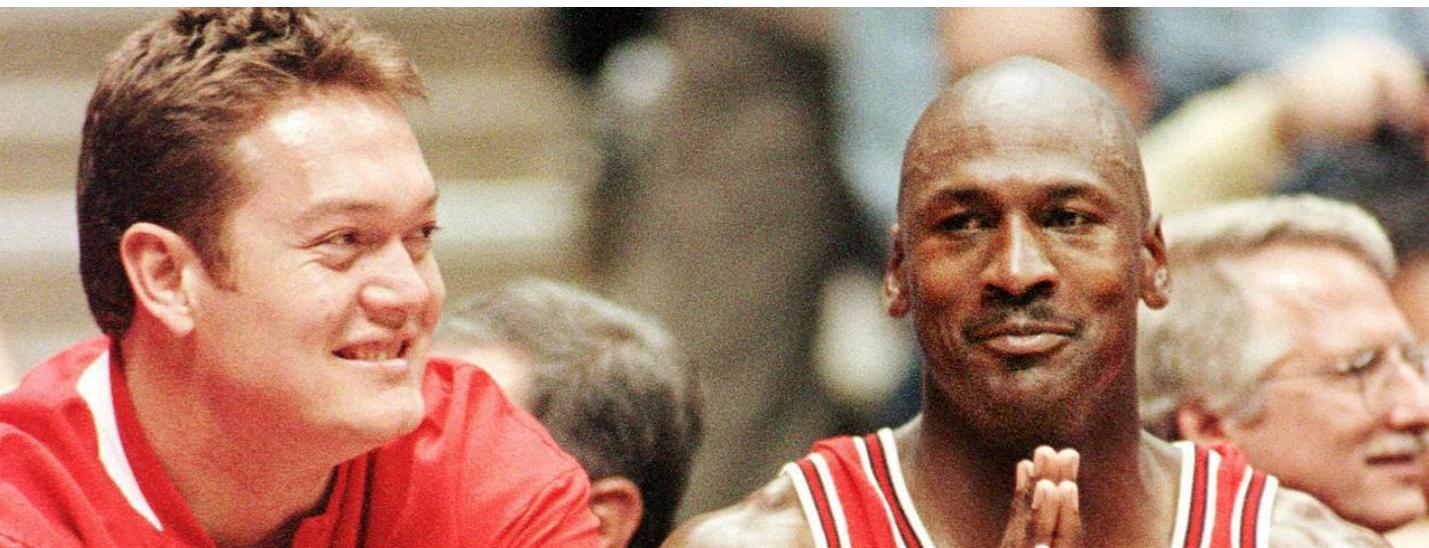


« To compete to win...
it's all I live for really »



Reconsidering the value of external goods Reason 2

Evidence suggests that practitioners motivated by external goods can prove the most excellent practitioners of all.



Luc Longley: Jordan was « a menace at practice... carnivorous... he wanted to disembowel and eat his teammates »

Reconsidering the value of external goods

Reason 3

Entrepreneurs with a documented motive to external goods have proven instrumental in not just the maintenance, but the actual creation of (subsequently flourishing) practices



Jake Burton Carpenter (1954-2019),
Founder of Burton Snowboards

Key Problems for MacIntyre

1. He can't explain how internal goods can motivate the creation of a practice given that internal goods can only exist once a practice is created
2. He can't explain the deliberate creation of practices (e.g., by entrepreneurs)
3. He can't admit that practices are flourishing in contemporary, modern societies
4. He can't explain how practitioners motivated by external goods can (significantly) advance excellence in practices

Consequently, we need a new perspective on practices.

Action Sports and the motive to create and commence practices

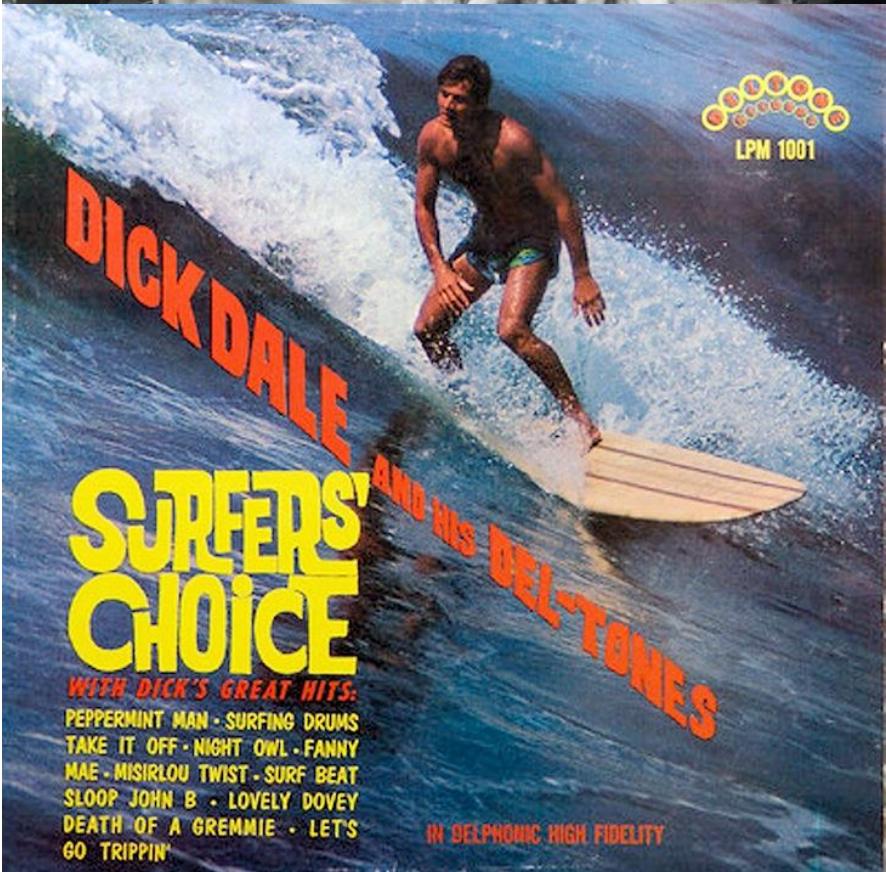
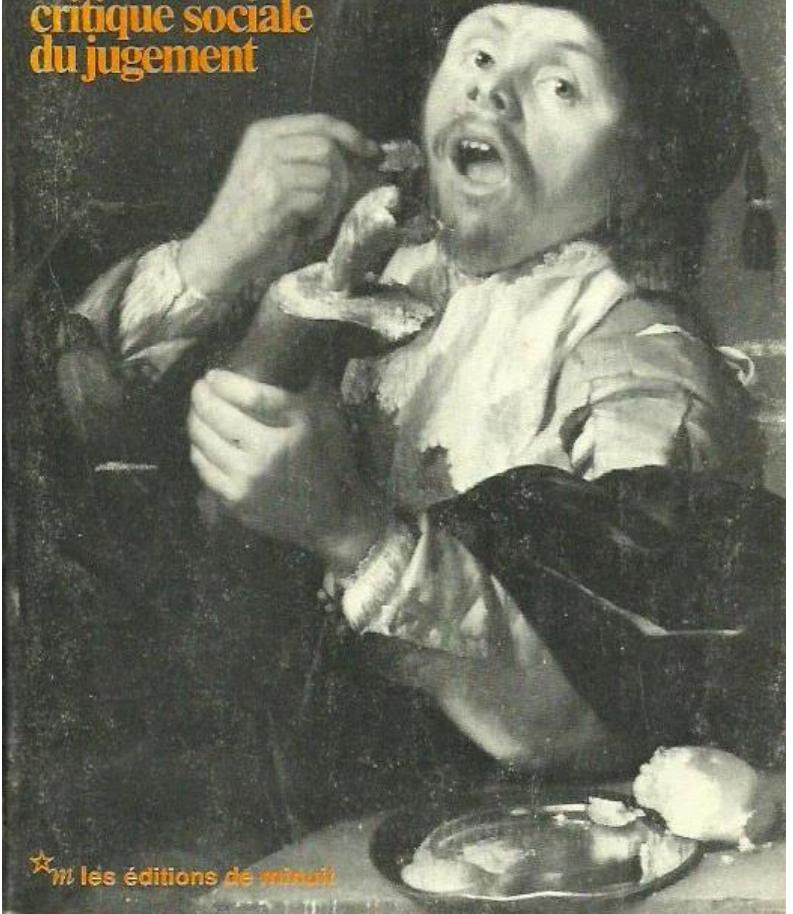
Table 1: Action Sports and Conventional Sports

	Action sports	Conventional sports
Activity	Individualistic	Collective (team) & individualistic
Form of interaction	Human–environment	Human–human
Participant relations	Non-zero-sum	Zero-sum
Objective outcomes (e.g., times, goals)	Sometimes important	Always important
Aesthetic/stylistic considerations	Nearly always important	Generally not important
Organization	Informal, open	Formal, rule bound
Amateur–professional boundary	Blurred	Distinct
Participation levels relative to media consumers	Very high	Low
Influence on personal identity/lifestyle	Very high	Low

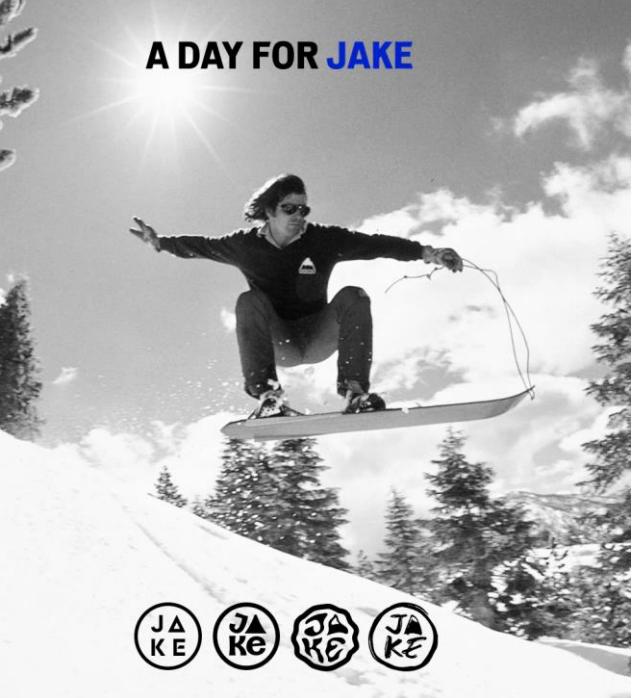
Note. Sources: Bourdieu (1978, 1984), Brymer and Feletti (2020), Dumont (2016), Ford and Brown (2006), Melo, van Rheenen, and Gammon (2020), Thorpe (2014).

le sens commun

la pierre bourdieu distinction critique sociale du jugement



A DAY FOR JAKE

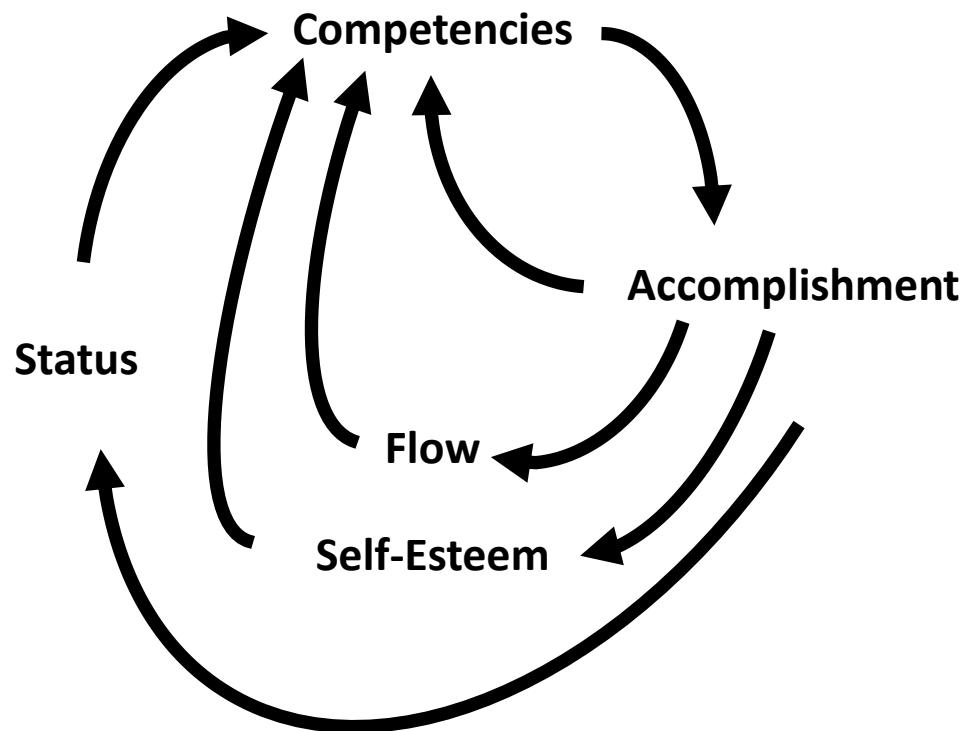


Why Create a Practice?

In short – it's a potentially huge source of external goods... and a potentially much greater source of capital/goods than can be obtained through existing practices

A first mover advantage that you might call 'creator's capital' or 'creator's windfall' (that tends to be intergenerational)

Why Start Engaging in a Practice?





Excellence in Action Sports

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A Quick Recap...

The motive to external goods can explain both why practices get created, and why someone would start, and become committed to, a practice.

In light of such, I now want to suggest that

1. Excellence in action sports can be conceived in terms of « Dangerous Progress »
2. « Commercial Complexes » play an essential role in conceiving « Dangerous Progress »
3. « Digital Acceleration » is a source of currently rapid advances in « Dangerous Progress »

Dangerous Progress

Tom Van Steenbergen Broke Hip Sockets Into Multiple Pieces, Femur, Lower Vertebrae & Shoulder in Red Bull Rampage Crash

Oct 15, 2021

by Sarah Moore

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The highest echelons of action sports excellence are reserved for practitioners that can complete the most technically difficult acts in situations of real consequence

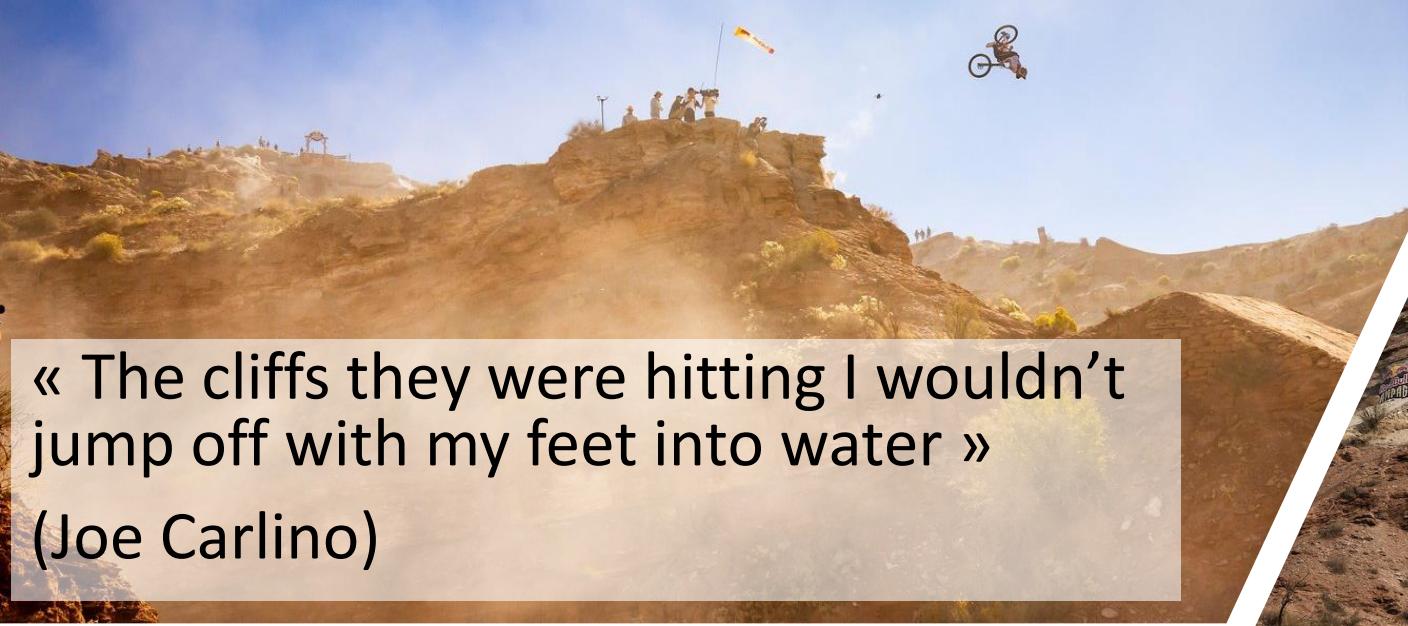
Update: Brage Vestavik Dislocates Shoulder & Breaks Humerus in Multiple Places in Massive Rampage Crash

Oct 15, 2021

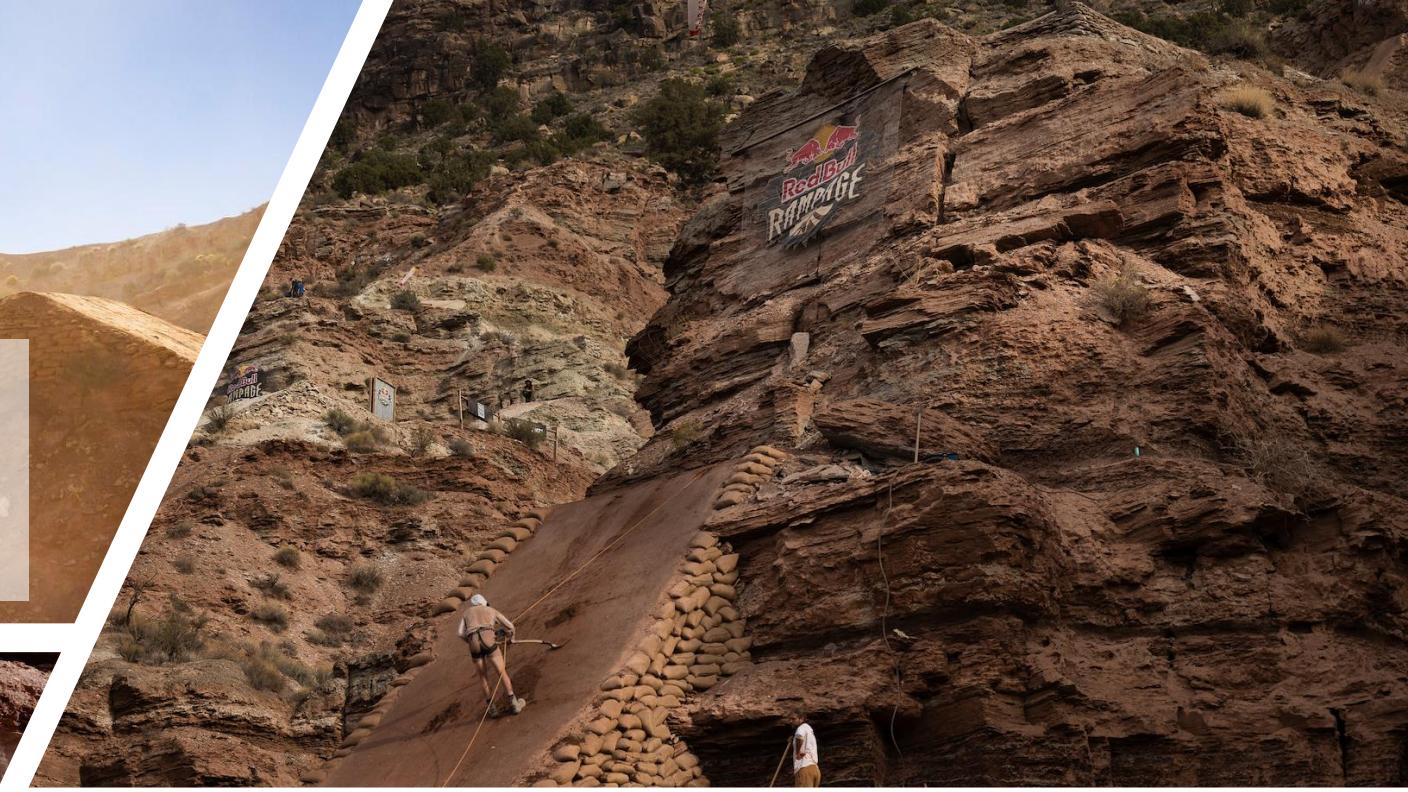
by Alicia Leggett

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« The cliffs they were hitting I wouldn't jump off with my feet into water »
(Joe Carlino)

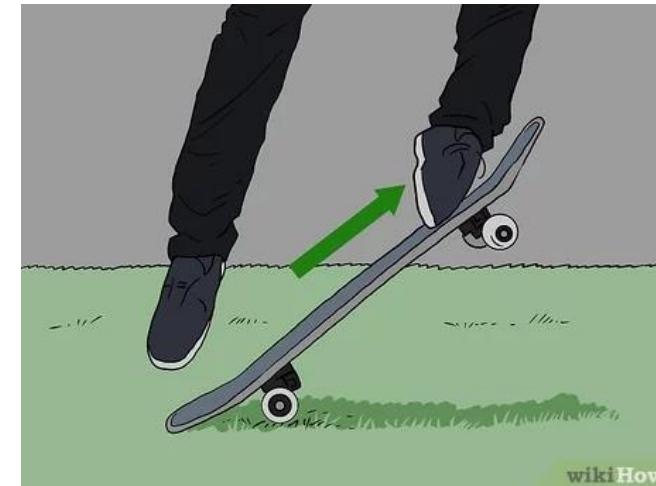


Measuring progress with hierarchical integration

Boardslide (1)



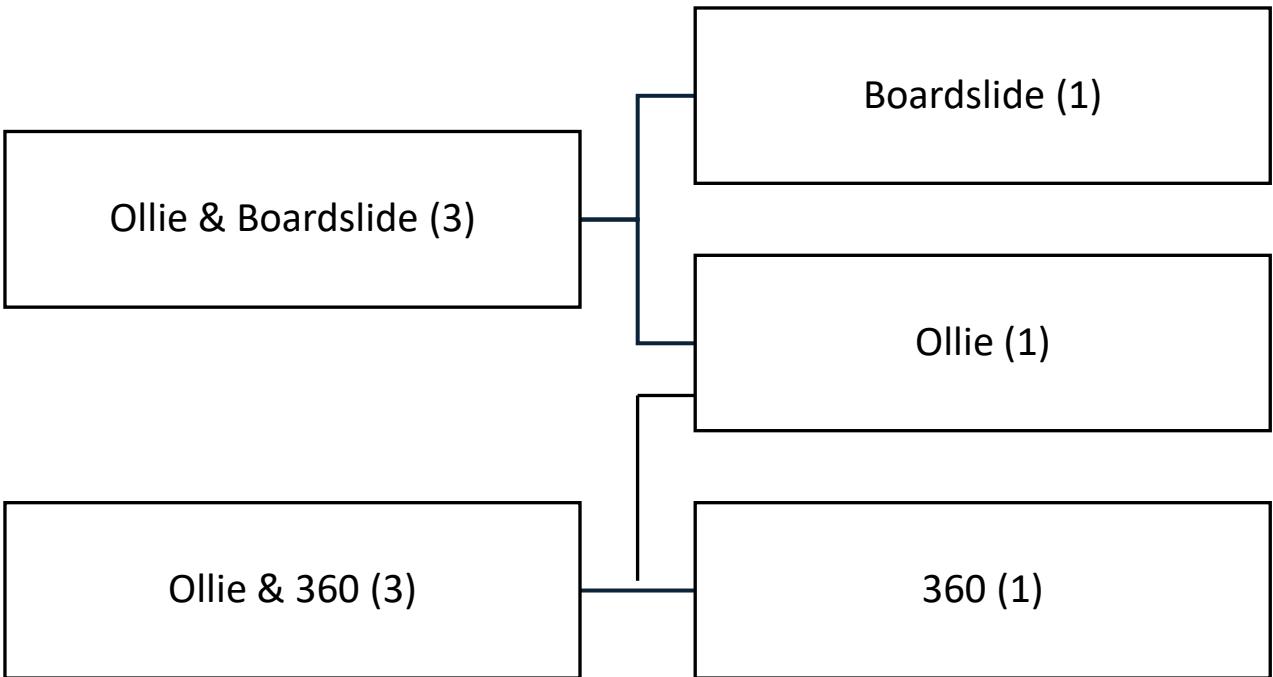
Ollie (1)

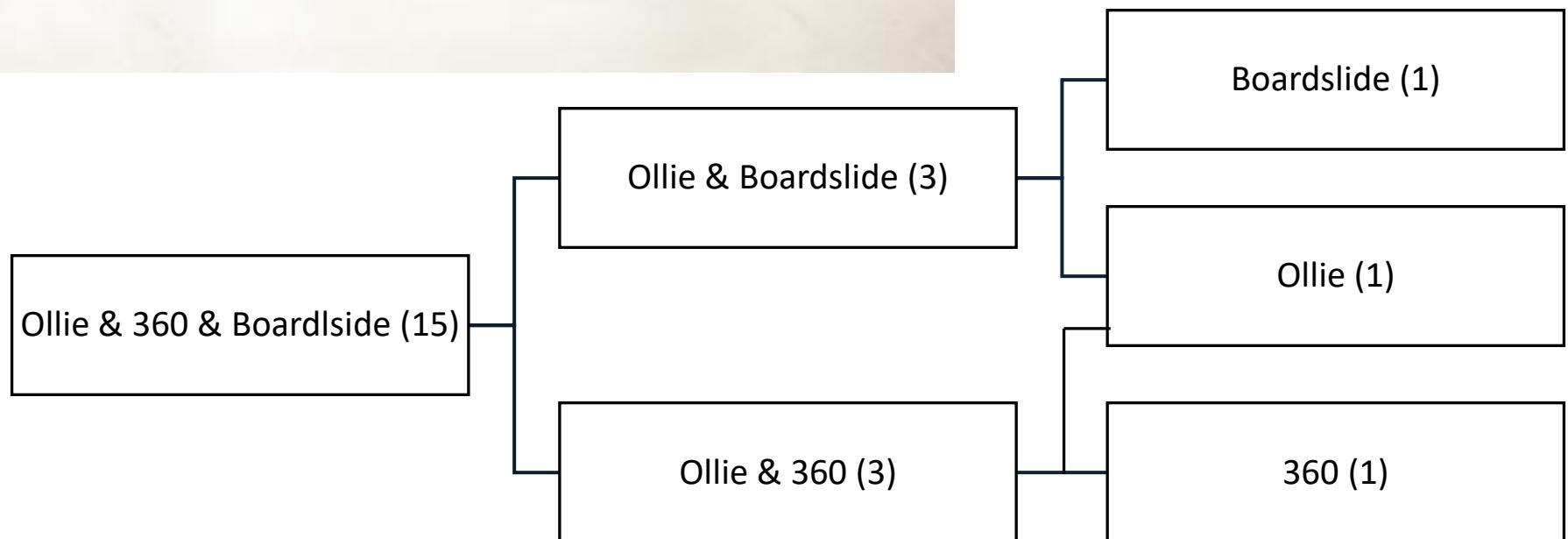


360 (1)



Measuring progress with hierarchical integration





Commercial Complexes



Digital Acceleration

The digital world

- Gives rise to 'global' competition
- Reduces the importance of traditional gatekeepers

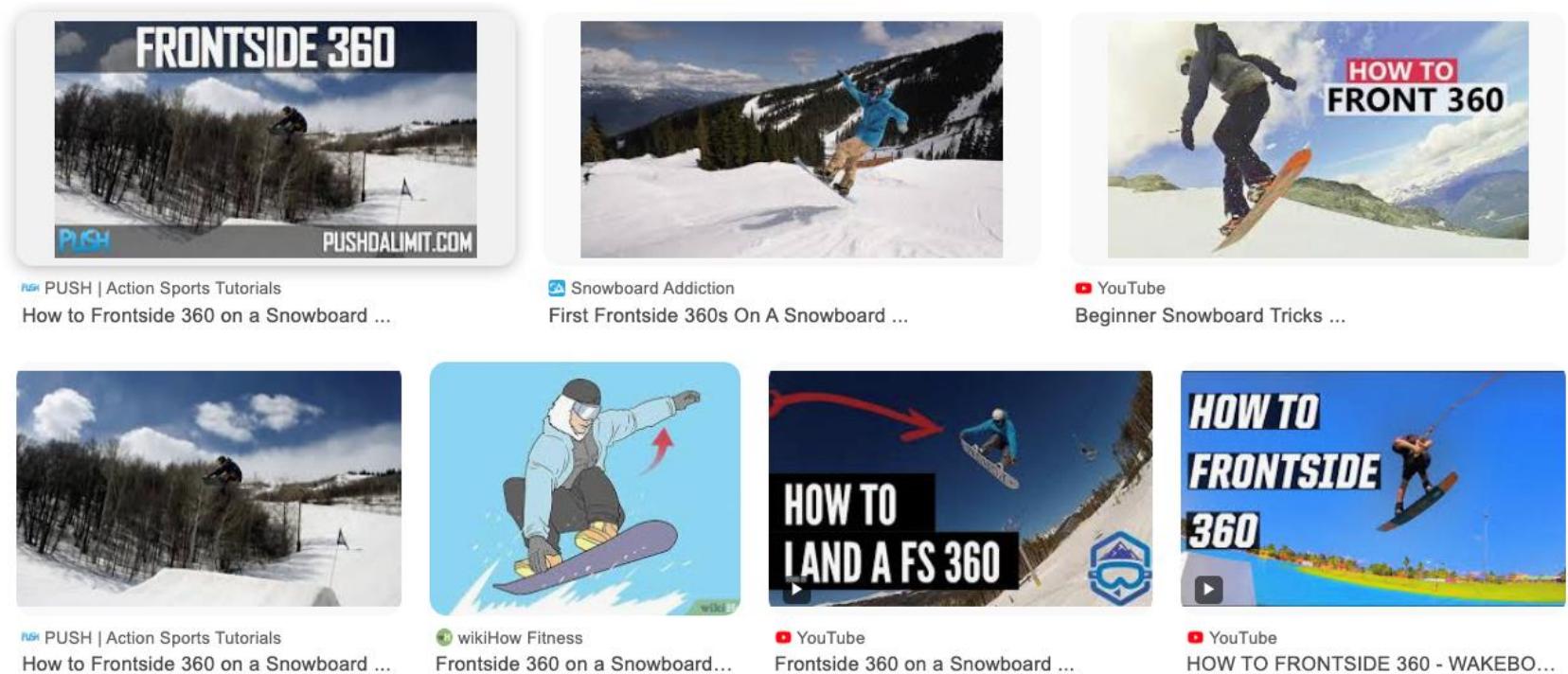


"Instagram...take it or leave it, but you can kind of...create your own destiny.... If you're good enough, and your clips are psycho enough, and they rise to the top of the feed ... you'll be seen and noticed" (Chris Grenier)



Digital Acceleration

- Frame by frame learning
- Makes learning online very accessible (and often without financial payment)



Digital Acceleration

Amplifies the push and pull pressures that shape identity and sense of adequacy and status

10 Easy
Tricks For
Beginners



PUSH PRESSURES



PULL PRESSURES

The Social Media Surfer

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surfer_magazine 2012 World Champion @joelparko announced late last night that he will be retiring from the 'CT'. After 19 incredible years on tour, Parko's last event will be the Pipemasters in December. Congratulations Parko on a stellar career and scoring the cover of our new Big Issue. For more information, follow our link in bio. Cover photo: @corey_wilson #SURFERmagazine

[View all 31 comments](#)

corey_wilson ❤️ ❤️ ❤️ ❤️

surfer_magazine @corey_wilson ⚡⚡⚡



- Always motivated by the 'love' of surfing
- Surfs a lot, but still has to work
- Has managed to become a very competent surfer (but 'only' in 95th percentile)
- Never had more than 1,000 followers on Insta
- Appear virtuous



- Motivated by external goods, but also very talented, from the start
- Had more than 100k followers at 18 on Insta
- Has turned surfing into a job
- Has had to overcome major injuries due to bad decision making
- Considered mathematics when they were recovering from injury
- Appears virtuous

MacIntyre suggests:

- the ‘friend’ is the more excellent surfer and more virtuous because they are motivated by surfing’s internal goods; and
- that the social media surfer is not really virtuous at all.



I suggest:

- the social media surfer is the more excellent surfer and have clearly advanced surfing’s internal goods much further than their friend has.
- the social media surfer is not any less virtuous than their friend, and may be even more virtuous given the difficulties they have overcome



Broader Concerns:
Practices are directly morally good in numerous
ways, but might they have other benefits too?

(Nature) Action Sports

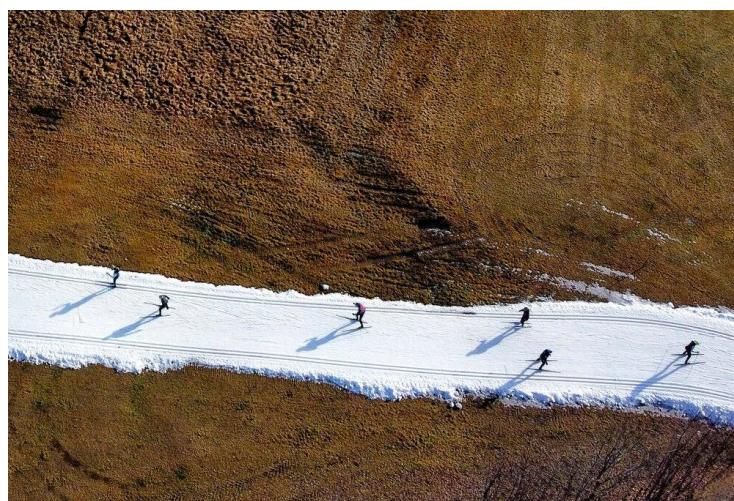
Can bring practitioners into fuller contact with indigenous communities and raise awareness of indigenous concerns

We acknowledge that this was filmed on the unceded traditional territory of the Stswecem'c Xget'tem. We thank these caretakers of this land who have lived and continue to live here since time immemorial.



(Nature) Action Sports

Can bring practitioners into fuller contact with 'wild' environments and advance sustainable identities





Thanks! Questions?

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sortir du cadre

