

DE LA SALLE – COLLEGE OF SAINT BENILDE

Contemporary Moral Problems

An IT-ETHIC Reader

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This book is all about my reviews, meditations, reactions and reflections on the chapter 1 of the book “Contemporary Moral Problems”.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my mentor, Mr. Paul Pajo for letting us know new things and knowledge about the subject. I also dedicate this book to my family for motivating me on every deliverables on this course. To all the readers of this book thank you very much.

PREFACE

This book is all about my reviews, meditations, reactions and reflections on the chapter 1 of the book “Contemporary Moral Problems”. This is my 3rd book under Mr. Paul Amerigo Pajo, my mentor in IT-ETHICS. Feel free to read

Angelo Amponin

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CHAPTER 1:

James Rachels: Egoism and Scepticism

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn what and how egoism affects our daily life. I also expect that I should be gathered some knowledge through citing examples, situations or scenarios from this chapter. As I will read the chapter, I will try to figure out the difference between egoism and scepticism.

Quote:

“If I want only my own good, and care nothing for others, then I am selfish; but if I also want other people to be well-off and happy, and if I act on that desire, then my action is not selfish.”

Review:

Basically, this chapter includes some contribution of James Rachels in the field of philosophy especially in ethics. In this reading, he mentioned about egoism and specifically about psychological egoism. In his statements, he had two arguments about this psychological egoism. One is that, based on the readings, “Psychological egoism seems to fly in the face of the facts. We are tempted to say: “Of course people act unselfishly all the time”. Also, the readings, cited example in order to know better about the concepts of egoism. This is nearly mean to unselfish behavior of some of the people. In this psychological egoism, there are 2 arguments built. The first argument goes like this, “the agent is merely doing what he most wants to do”. This means that, we do a certain thing because we want it or we tend to do that thing. Aside from Smith’s situation, I think of another scenario. For example, a simple person volunteers to help the people who are victim of calamities in his country. We can say that, he really want to help the victims because he volunteered. This will fall a statement on the reading, “the argument rests on the premise that people never voluntarily do anything except what they want to do.” The second argument is “unselfish actions always produce a sense of self-satisfaction in the agent”, which is nearly similar to previous argument.

As I read through the text, I gathered that we should feel happy or satisfied on what we’ve done in our life because we made our own decision and we should be responsible or aware of the decision we should made.

What I’ve learned:

- We should have peace of mind in decision making
- Think first before we decide
- Egoism has significance on what we are doing

Integrative Questions:

1. What is egoism?
2. What are the effects of egoism in our daily life?
3. Why we should have “peace of mind” when we are do decision making?

John Arthur: Religion, Morality, Conscience

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

To know much better of the topic through giving of examples
To know what are the essence of the three
To know how each term affects our daily life

Quote:

“God does what He please”

Review:

This particular chapter is contributed by John Arthur, a professor of philosophy at Binghamton University. With his contributes, Religion, Morality, Conscience, he divided his statements into three thoughts. Firstly, he mentioned how religion affects our daily life and how it affects every activity we're doing. In the first part of his statement, he mentioned that “religion is therefore said to be a necessary in that it provides motivation to do right thing”, which is absolutely true. Though our religion, we have, “walls” to lean on and religion serve as an “ear” for us to approach and share our dilemmas to work on. Through religion, we are being familiarized to know how to capture the “divine intervention”. The next topic he stated is the “divine command theory”. In this part of the reading, it mentioned and emphasized to us that God is should our center of concerns. “God’s first before anything else”. According to the topic, “without God’s commands there would be no moral rules” which means that we should be aware of Him and we should follow sincerely his commands because “God rewards those who follow his commands” . Next topic is the morality. Morality is the quality of being in accord with standards of right or good conduct or a system of ideas that fall into those same categories.

So to conclude this chapter, I gathered all of the thoughts in just one word, “God”. Specifically, this part of the chapter is focus on religion, right things to do and especially with God.

What I’ve learned:

- I’ve learned what are the difference of the three
- God’s first before anything else
- Religion motivates

Integrative Questions:

- What is the essence of religion?
- Why we should have “divine intervention”?
- How morality and religious different?

Reference

<http://www.allaboutphilosophy.org/definition-of-morality-faq.htm>

Friedrich Nietzsche: Master- and Slave-Morality

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

To know what are the effects of the two in our daily life
To know what are the differences between the two

Quote:

“He who has not a hard heart when young , will never have one”

Review:

This part of the chapter is basically the contributions of Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher and poet. He divided his text into two, master-morality and slave-morality. Firstly based on my research on the net (thanks for Wikipedia), master morality is defined by Friedrich Nietzsche as the morality of the strong-willed. Nietzsche criticizes the view, which he identifies with contemporary British ideology that good is everything that is helpful; what is bad is what is harmful. He argues that this view has forgotten the origins of the values, and thus it calls what is useful good on the grounds of habitualness - what is useful has always been defined as good, therefore usefulness is goodness as a value. He continues explaining, that in the prehistoric state, "the value or non-value of an action was derived from its consequences" but ultimately, "There are no moral phenomena at all, only moral interpretations of phenomena." On the other hand, slave morality is defined by Nietzsche as a re-resentiment or in other words, revaluing that which the master values. As master morality originates in the strong, slave morality originates in the weak. Because slave morality is a reaction to oppression, it villainizes its oppressors. Slave morality is the inverse of master morality. As such, it is characterized by pessimism and skepticism. Slave morality is created in opposition to what master morality values as 'good'. Slave morality does not aim at exerting one's will by strength but by careful subversion. It does not seek to transcend the masters, but to make them slaves as well. The essence of slave morality is utility.

What I've learned:

I've learned the difference between master morality and slave morality.

Some effects of the two in our life.

Integrative Questions:

Reference:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master-slave_morality

Mary Midgley: Trying Out One's New Sword

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

To know why "Trying Out One's New Sword" is the title of the reading.
To know what are the significance of that sword.

Quote:

"Moral isolation forbids us to form any opinions on these matters"

"To respect someone, we have to know enough about him to make a favorable judgment, however general and tentative."

Review:

When I first read the title of this reading, I wonder about the sword in the title. It was actually culture of the Japanese wherein, samurai sword should be tested and tried. If the sword worked, it had to slice through someone, from shoulder to the opposite flank, then if it doesn't work, then the warrior ruined his ancestors and may affect his honor in his place. Mary gave this as an example because of culture. Basically the reading is all about culture. He also mentioned about "moral isolationism" which means that based on the reading, we cannot criticize cultures that we do not understand. He argued that "nobody can respect what is entirely unintelligible to them. To respect someone, we have to know enough about him to make a favorable judgment, however general and tentative. And we do not understand people in other cultures to this extent. Otherwise a great mass of our most valuable thinking would be paralyzed"

In my opinion, he's right about disagreeing this particular statement. I think the quote is true because in respecting one's culture you think before if it is clear to your or you understand very well the culture. In other words, you have seen or tried a certain culture. For example, in a certain place, their culture is to kill somebody. So, in this culture, I can have my objection and try to protest why they have that type of culture in their place. Midgley also mentioned some questions should be answered related in moral isolationism and examples as well

Integrative questions:

What is moral isolationism?

How culture related in moral isolationism?

What is the significance of "sword" in the title?

John Stuart Mill: Utilitarianism

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

- To know what utilitarianism means (literal meaning).
- To know how it affects our life and values
- To know how to apply John's concept in IT

Quote:

"To do as you would be done by add to love your neighbor as yourself, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality."

Review:

For all of the people I know, probably all of them want to be happy or they want to feel that sense of joy, satisfaction and contentment. This particular reading is the one of the contribution of John Stuart Mill, one of the most important and influential British philosophers. One of his basic principles is all about the Principle of Utility or the Greatest Happiness Principle. The reading said in order for you to be happy, you must have the sense of pleasure. Based on my additional research (from Wikipedia.com), utilitarianism is an action that is determined in providing happiness and pleasure. It is actually a form of consequentialism, or in other words that the moral worth of an action is based on its outcome.

On the first part of the article, it goes like this, "Greatest happiness principle holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness." This is definitely true especially in real life. Why? How come? It is because when you want something, you can do all your best to pursue that thing. In my opinion, this statement has similarities on the contents of the book, "The Secret". The book is actually emphasizes the "law of attraction", when you have things that you don't want to happen, take away them from your minds. Just focus on the positive or the brighter side. For me, it is also the essence of utility. Focus on the things you want then it will surely happen.

What I've learn:

- I've learned what the essence of utilitarianism is.
- I've learned how the concepts of John apply in our life.
- I've learned why we should have pleasures in our minds.

Integrative questions:

- What is utilitarianism?
- Why we should have pleasures in our mind?
- How pleasures and happiness connected?

James Rachels: The Debate over Utilitarianism

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

To know what is the debate.

To learn what are the effects of utilitarianism in our environment and culture.

To know some examples of this philosophy.

Quote: Hedonism – “Happiness is the one ultimate good and unhappiness the one ultimate evil”

Review:

We discussed that utilitarianism is your pleasure to be happy. Utility means that you have the sense of joy and satisfaction. One good example is when you are discipline yourself on eating delicious food. Based on my perspectives on this scenario, when you wish to eat a particular food, you think first whether if you continue to eat, is it for your pleasure or for your health? We, Filipinos are fun of eating so that this particular scenario is very applicable on utilitarianism. “Pleasure” is the key word for this reading. For me, it is applicable on our life especially on decision making on your duties. It emphasizes that we must think first before you move for the next level. Just like playing an RPG game, you must concentrate and focus first on your existing level before you claim your reward. In reality, you must think first on your decision to do business or not. James Rachels mentioned about the Hedonsim. It claims that happiness is a good manner and the sense of unhappiness is evil. I agree on this statement and it is relevant in our daily life. For example you are in a large company and you have the most complicated job in your department, you must overcome your stress and the feeling of depression. You must take into account your happiness being human in this world. In other words, take into account and take the brighter side or the positive side. Life is attraction. If you wish to be happy then you will claim your reward then if you wish to be unhappy then you must overcome your bad feelings.

What I’ve learned:

I’ve learned how to apply this reading on our life.

I’ve learned how the concept of Hedonsim.

I knew how to control pleasures.

IQ:

What is utility?

What are the three defense of utilitarianism?

What is Hedonism?

Immanuel Kant: The Categorical Imperative

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn: To be able to learn what is categorical imperative is.

To know what are the effects of it to us.

To give examples of categorical imperative.

Quote:

“A good will is good through its willingly done- that is good in itself”

Review:

For this particular reading, I wonder first what the meaning of categorical imperative is. Based on my understandings, Immanuel Kant made a one supreme rule, the categorical imperative. Through that rule he defined different versions, the good will and duty. This two versions, he explained how this two affects us. First on the list is the good will. What is a good will? For me, a good will is an act is done properly or it is done with the sense of care. From the word itself, “good”, meaning it rightly done by a certain person. For instance, you are in the mall and you saw a wallet on the floor and bringing it to the customer service area. It is a will. When we say a will, it is optional or in other words you can do certain thing or not. For good will, it is your option to do certain thing but in “duty” – you must do it whether you want or not. A good example of this is the law. If you can’t obey laws, you can be sued in court or even in jail. Immanuel Kant also discussed about psychological imperative and categorical imperative. Psychological means that you don’t know what’s the will contain until a condition is given. On the other hand, categorical imperative means that you know what a certain thing contains. For example, a certain doings you wish to desired but you don’t know what the consequences you should do before are. And doing a certain thing that you already knew the consequences if you do that thing.

What I’ve learned:

I’ve learned the differences between psychological and categorical imperative.

I’ve learned to formulate an examples of a good will and duty based on my readings.

I’ve learned the supreme rule of Immanuel Kant.

Integrative questions:

What are the two versions of supreme rule of Kant?

What is the difference between good will and duty?

What is the difference between psychological and categorical imperative?

Aristotle: Happiness and Virtue

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn: To know what are the examples of happiness and virtue.

To know what is the significance of happiness and virtue especially in business.

To know what are the difference of the two.

Quote:

“For men are good in but in one way, but bad in many.”

Review:

We all know that Aristotle is one of the most important persons and biggest names not only on the field of philosophy but also on the field of science, logic and many more. People know about Aristotle about his contributions in philosophy. When we are studying philosophy, one of the longest topics is about Aristotle. In this particular reading, talks about one of his major contributions the happiness and virtue. So do you mean by happiness? By virtue? In my reaction and in the reading we can figure out how they differ. Happiness, based on the text, is comes on our soul. Meaning, we are related we are one of the significances of happiness. Supposing an entrepreneur, initially he did startups, making investments, looking for his venture capitalists , etc. Then as he achieved his dreams he became happy and satisfied. That’s the thing why people are involved in happiness. Next on the list is the virtue? Basically, first thing comes in my mind is “do it first before you enjoy”. Based on my understandings, we are feeling the sense of virtue when we attain happiness. It means that, you must push through yourself for a certain thing before you achieve something big. For example, in IT-ETHICS class, before you can get a 4.0 grade, you must be a hardworking student and active in all deliverables. Then you reached your goal and you are happy. And there is the sense of joyful, achievement and satisfaction.

What I’ve learned:

I’ve learned to formulate examples of happiness and virtue

I’ve learned the perspective of Aristotle.

I’ve learned the difference between the two.

Integrative questions:

For Aristotle, what is the meaning of happiness and virtue?

What are the qualifications to attain achievements?

Joel Freinberg: Nature and Value of Rights

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn:

To know what are the rights to give importance.

To know Freinberg's perspective.

To know the relationships between the two.

Quote:

"World without rights"

Review:

Human rights? What are the rights of people? I would like to share our human rights here in Philippines. According to Wikipedia:

"Human rights in the Philippines has been a subject of concern and controversy. According to U.S. Country Profile on the Philippines dated March 2006, the U.S. State Department reported in 2006 that Philippine security forces have been responsible for serious human rights abuses despite the efforts of civilian authorities to control them.^[1] The report found that although the government generally respected human rights, some security forces elements—particularly the Philippine National Police—practiced extrajudicial killings, vigilantism, disappearances, torture, and arbitrary arrest and detention in their battle against criminals and terrorists. Prison conditions were harsh, and the slow judicial process as well as corrupt police, judges, and prosecutors impaired due process and the rule of law. Besides criminals and terrorists, human rights activists, atheists and agnostic, left-wing political activists, and Muslims were sometimes the victims of improper police conduct. Violence against women and abuse of children remained serious problems, and some children were pressed into slave labor and prostitution. "

For Freinberg, rights is one of the important for us people especially if your country has a democracy country like Philippines. Imagine that, even if the children has the rights such as right to go to schools and to be educated. For him, when you do not value rights if the people, you cannot make moral claims because you stole justice and rights from them.

What I've learned:

Individual rights of people.

Valuing rights is actually doing moral doings.

Integrative questions:

What are your consequences when you do not value rights of people?

What is human rights?

How it affects our life?

Reference:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights_in_the_Philippines

Ronald Dworkin: Taking Rights Seriously

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn: To know what are the importance of rights to us.

To know ,if all rights are moral.

To be able to know what is the perspective of Dworkin

Quote: “The institution of rights against the Government is not a gift of God or an ancient ritual or a national sport.”

Review:

According to Ronald Dworkin, a professor in Oxford University and authors of different works such as the “A bill of Rights for Britain”, if you have the right to pursue something then it is wrong when someone hinders you to pursue that thing. For example, in a democracy country, government should not obstruct the rights of the people. For Dworkin, it is wrong to interfere somebody’s rights. In the reading, Dworkin discussed about legal rights and moral rights. In my opinion, legal rights is just a rights imposed by the government. We can say that a legal right is a moral right if it is good on your perspectives and others’ perspectives. For example, in your culture you have the right to share your opinions, reactions and comments to the noble ones and if you and other people think that it is a good perspective then you can do it. We can also say that a moral right is not a legal right if it is not good on the perspectives of the ruler or the government. For example, in your country has declared the martial law and you do not have the right to speak to the public and only those officials have the right to speak up, then it is not a legal right because it is imposed and it is the order of the government. Dworkin also formulates two different models to define the rights of citizens: if the government infringes on a moral right and if the government inflates a right.

What I’ve learned:

I’ve learned the difference with legal and moral rights.

I was able to formulate examples legal rights that are moral and moral rights that are legal.

I was able to know the perspective of Dworkin regarding rights of human.

Integrative questions:

What are moral and legal rights?

Give examples each.

What are the works of Dworkin?

What is his perspective based on the reading?

Ronald Rawls: A Theory of Justice

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn: To be able to know what is justice for Rawls.

Quote: “Justice as fairness”

Review:

Basically this reading is all about justice and what are the two justice principles formulated by Rawls. On the first part of the reading, Rawls mentioned about his understandings about the original position. Rawls said that, in working out the perspective of justice as fairness is you should determine which principles of justice would be chosen in the original position. Based on the reading original position is based on the understanding it as a purely hypothetical situation characterized in order for you to lead to the conception of justice. He said that in original position, no one knows his place, his situation, his world such as his intelligence, strength and weaknesses. That’s why he said that the principles of justice is based on the veil of ignorance. In other words, everyone will be treated equally or based on the reading no one is advantaged or disadvantaged.

Rawls, although he said that it is only the tentative, formulated 2 principles. One is, “each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others”. This means that, everyone has the right to do something that makes him happy as long as that thing does not hinder with similar happiness to others. For me this principle will become complicated to someone because if a certain person does a thing that makes him happy and that thing is illegal. The second principle is: “social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both reasonably expected to be everyone’s advantage”. This principle means that everyone should have the advantage and all things should be accessible to everyone.

What I’ve learned:

I’ve learned the 2 principles of justice formulated by Rawls

How to apply justice and respect.

The sense of fairness to all things.

Integrative Questions:

What is original position for Rawls?

What are the 2 principles of justice?

Explain each.

What are the works of Rawls?

Annette Baier: The need for More Than Justice

Amazon link: N/A

What I expect to learn: To know what is that “need”.

To know how justice is important for Baier.

To be able to formulate examples of perspective of Baier.

Quote: “Justice is a social value of very great importance and injustice an evil”

Review:

In this particular reading, Annette Baier learned from Kant and Rawls the justice perspective especially on the moral development on women. She argues that justice is inadequate as a moral theory. Inequalities means that, certain emotions don’t have importance to few of us. For Baier, 2 important things regarding moral theory, the justice and care. Based on the reading, “justice is a social value of very great importance and injustice an evil”. This means that, in this world justice is very important to us. Like our generation, most of the people are now “evil thinker”. Several crimes occurred like bombing, killing, kidnapping etc. Our world now is full of evil. That’s why we must value and have the sense of importance on justice. Next is about “care”, she mentioned on the reading that in Gilligan’s perspective, women perceive the fraternity or the value of equalities most easily.

In the reading, Baier also mentioned about the two perspectives on moral and social issues. First perspective is the justice perspective. As I’ve said earlier, we must have a great importance to justice and we should have time for it and must learn to value justice. Second is the care perspective, the reading mentioned that many of the male philosophers have contributions on care perspective such as Laurence Thomas, Lawrence Blum and Michael Stucker.

What I’ve learned:

We must value justice and care perspectives.

The two perspectives of moral and social issues are the justice and care perspectives.

I’ve learned some works of Baier.

Integrative questions:

What is justice on the perspective of Baier?

Why we must value justice?

What are the works of Baier?

Who are the famous male philosophers contribute on care perspective?