

DE LA SALLE – COLLEGE OF SAINT BENILDE

Compilation of Book Reviews

Contemporary Moral Problems

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Dedication

I dedicated this book first to our Dear Lord for always guiding me in writing my reactions and for always giving me strength. Second is to my family for supporting and appreciating my works. Third is for my dearest friends who have always been there to encourage me and give word of wisdom to enlighten me. And last but not the least, to our professor who gave this task: Mr. Paul Pajo. Even though we find it difficult to do we successfully published our own book. This is my third book created.

Preface

This book contains the compilation of my insights and understanding of our current moral problems and ethical theories integrated to each problem explained by different philosophers. I have encountered parts of this book that I find it hard to understand what's the philosopher' trying to convey with his expression and explanation of a certain theory. But on the other hand it is an opportunity with me to encounter this kind of reading materials because it gives me an idea on some of the ethical theories that philosophers are trying to convey to its readers. In reading this book I got to understand the philosophy and notions of the philosophers and why do they come up with these ideas.

Ethical Theories

Egoism and Moral Scepticism

James Rachels

What I expect to learn:

- to know what is the meaning of egoism and scepticism
- to identify the similarities and differences of the two theories
- to know how it affects the people's mind and understanding

Quote:

"...If we have a positive attitude towards the attainment of some goal, then we may derive satisfaction from attaining that goal"

Review:

In the start of the discussion of the theory, it was said that morality is full of assumptions. Like assumption not to hurt other people because it was the good thing to do. Rachel's makes example of the Legend of Gyges. A shepherd who saw a magical ring in a fissure as the power of the ring it can make someone invisible. Therefore that person has the capability to do anything without anyone to discover him. But Glaucon said that there are two kinds of ring. One was given to a man of virtue and the other to a rogue. It is by nature to the rogue to use the ring to do immoral act but the question is how one, the virtuous man act using the magical ring will? He can do the same thing if he wants, things that is best for him as what the rogue does. This is where psychological and ethical egoism comes in.

Psychological Egoism views that all men are selfish in everything they do and they act it for their self-interest. Most of the people do what they want that they think will benefit them or have a large impact to them. While in Ethical Egoism view it is how men might or should act, it is according to their own interest. They act based on what they think they should do. in doing such actions there are many things or reason why you do or not the specific act like, it was part of your promise but it is also depends if you want to do your promised or not. Furthermore, there's an act that we want to do or is an obligation for us to do it. This is some of the implication whether an act is selfish or not.

What I have learned:

- People could also act unselfishly based on their reason like concern for others
- In anything that we do it is not always based on selfish or unselfish interest or what the person wants to do but rather sometimes it is under an obligation that we must do it.
- It doesn't mean that if you want something it is an act of selfishness it also depends if what you want is for your own good that is selfishness but if it includes the welfare of others then it is unselfishness.

Integrative Questions:

1. What is the legend of Gyges is all about?
2. What is Psychological Egoism?
3. What is Ethical Egoism?
4. Difference of Psychological from Ethical Egoism?

Religion, Morality and Conscience

John Arthur

What I expect to learn:

- to identify what is religion, morality and conscience
- to know how this 3 concepts distinguish from each other
- to know what is the relation of the 3 concepts to each other

Quote:

"...People would have no tendency to evaluate or criticize behavior of others nor to feel remorse about their own behavior"

Review:

John Arthur was a professor of philosophy who rejects the ways that morality depends on religion. But how does religion affects morality? Putting a moral code is where we evaluate the behavior of others and feel guilt at certain actions when we perform them while religion involves the beliefs on supernatural power, to worship and pray to those they take as their god. One of the roles of religion is to motivate people to do the right thing. But the claim of John Arthur, religion was not necessary to have a good moral. It is all about what people want to do that resulted from their decision to do the right thing and religion is not necessary. Another claim is "morality is social". it was said that is inherently social. Because it deals with people, defining the responsibilities and it is also an interaction with your family, lovers, friends, and other people. Conscience is also part of 'social' because it is a common reaction of any individuals.

The bottom-line for Arthur's claim is, religion is not necessary in providing moral motivation or guidance and that a religious person should not based to the Divine Command theory's claim that God is necessary to a person to be moral.

What I've learned:

- Morality was the act of a person or its attitude while religion was the practices of religious belief.
- Religion has nothing to do with the decision to what people think is right and rather it is for their moral motivation

Integrative Questions:

1. What is religion?
2. What is morality?
3. Is religion necessary to gain morality?
4. Is morality social?
5. What is one of the roles of religion in relation to morality?

Master - and Slave - Morality Friedrich Nietzsche

What I expect to learn:

- To know the meaning of Master and Slave Morality
- To identify the differences of the two theories
- To know the relation of the two theories

Quote:

"He, who has not hard hearted when young, will never have one"

Review:

According to Nietzsche there are two types of morality classes in the society; the master morality and the slave morality. Master morality is where the ruling class belongs; it is the elite, aristocrats and noble one. They tend to be the good one. This two theory discussed by Nietzsche are the good and the bad which is also mean the 'noble' and 'despicable'. The noble are the masters while the despicable are the slaves. When Nietzsche speaks of noble people they are the one who has the power and has the distinguishing characteristic. In ancient Greek nobility called themselves as *"the creator of values"* for having the power to imposed what moral values they think for them is right and it should be right also for the others. They regards themselves as the determiner of values and for them morality is self-glorification or superiority to others. These people considered themselves as the powerful one. Being powerful, the elite class helps people out of pity. They help the poor not because they're mercy but they think it is their obligation to help the poor since they are the one who has the power and the ability to give. While the abused, oppressed, suffering, lee privilege and weary are characteristics pointed to the despicable or the slave. They are the opposite of the elite and noble class. Nobility class believes that the common people are the untruthful one compare to them being good.

What I've learned:

- there are so much thing that a powerful man can do
- you can help other people our of pity because you think it is the right thing to do

Integrative questions:

1. What is Master Morality?
2. What is Slave Morality?
3. What are the differences between the two moralities?
4. What is the distinguish characteristic of the master morality?
5. How do the master moralities called themselves compared to the slave?

Trying Out One's New Sword

Mary Midgley

What I expect to learn:

- to know what is the meaning of the title
- to know the theory Midgley wants to convey

Quote:

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

Review:

In this theory Midgley discussed the "Moral Isolationism" where one has no right to criticize the culture that you don't understand. Every person has its own culture where he grows up and it forbids as forming any opinion or even judging it. But what is judging? According to Midgley "judging simply means forming an opinion and expressing it if it is called for". There;s nothing wrong about judging but we should not make crude opinions that's why moral isolationism prohibit people from judging. Midgley make used of the Japanese culture which was called "tsujigiri" or literally means "crossroads-cuts" This practice was known to as "trying out ones new sword on a Chinese wayfarer", where samurai sword has to be tried out at someone's body which is the wayfarer. it is a test for the warrior to slice the body of the wayfarer in a single blow. if he failed the test, this will caused shamed to his ancestors and to his honor. in this example it could be rude for some people who will heard this kind of practices and the way they treat other people like killing was so easy for the Japanese culture but they don't have the right to judge what their culture is. This is part of the culture where they've known for since they born therefore we don't have the right to think that it is immoral. PeOple has their own belief and practices hence we should learn how to respect each one of them.

What I've learned:

- People doesn't have the rights to judge or criticize other people's culture they don't know
- Know how to respect other people's culture.

Integrative Questions:

1. What is Moral Isolationism?
2. How we should treat other cultures we don't know?
3. What is judging?
4. Can we judge other people's culture? Why / why not?

Utilitarianism

Jon Stuart Mill

What I expect to learn:

- To know what is utilitarianism
- To know the concept of this theory
- To know why John Stuart Mill lead to this theory

Quote:

“By happiness in intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure”

Review:

Utilitarianism by John Stuart Mill talks about the utility or the Greatest Happiness principle. For Mill happiness is good. He defended that actions are right if they resulted to happiness and actions are wrong if they caused harm and the reverse of happiness to people. In this theory, pleasure and freedom from pain are the only things desirable as the means of ends. Stuart mill set a distinction between knowing what is more desirable and valuable pleasures compared to others. Stuart Mill explained it as “if there be one to which all or almost all who have experienced of both give a decided preference, irrespective to any feeling of moral obligation and many people agrees and had an experienced about this, then this could be your preference that that pleasure is desirable”. This could simply mean that if most of people experience the same thing as you are and claim that it lead them to happiness then it might the desirable pleasure your can choose. If you desired a thing it can lead you to happiness, but desire is only one part of pursuing your happiness. It was said that “happiness is not an abstract idea but a concrete whole”, I agree because if someone knows what he wants or desire it can make him happy and that person knows the things that can make him happy. No one’s happiness is more important than the other people’s happiness rather they should be treated as equally important. Therefore, for Mill good is achieving your own happiness.

What I’ve learned:

- What makes you happy is good
- Appreciate and respect other people’s happiness

Integrative questions:

1. What is utilitarianism?
2. What are the things that are desirable as an end?
3. How would you that the happiness you chose is more valuable than the other?

The Debate over Utilitarianism

James Rachels

What I expect to learn:

- To know what is the debate over utilitarianism all about
- To know why is it trying to contradict the theory John Stuart Mill
- To identify the reason of the debate

Quote:

"It makes us happy to have them but only because we already think them good"

Review:

This debate about utilitarianism of the anti-utilitarianism concludes that the theory must be abandoned. But it was defended of the current utilitarian that the theory must not be deserted but only be modified to meet the satisfactory form. Their first argument is about the importance of happiness to produce the right thing or action to do. As an example we think that studying makes as happy so it is good it was in the view if Mill but in the debate we already think that studying is good hence it makes as happy. They refer to the Hedonistic idea which is happiness is one of the ultimate good and unhappiness is the one ultimate evil. In this debate, Moore suggested the three obvious essential goods namely pleasure, friendship and aesthetic enjoyment.

The hedonistic notion they take in the reverse way the theory of happiness. They claim that what makes you happy is what is good. For example friends makes you happy so you will claim that it is good but what the contemporary utilitarian means that having friends is good hence it can create you happiness. Happiness can be achieved if you only do good things. And there are factors affecting our happiness and how we evaluate if do is good.

What I've learned:

- We shouldn't think that the thing is good because it makes happy rather we already think that it is good therefore it can make us happy.
- Happiness is what we get in knowing what is good

Integrative Questions:

1. What is debate of utilitarianism about?
2. What is hedonism?
3. How can you achieve your happiness?

Categorical Imperative

Immanuel Kant

What I Expect to Learn:

-To have a clear understanding about the the meaning and implication of Categorical Imperative

Quotes:

"It is impossible to conceive things at all in the world or even out of it which can be taken as good without qualification, except as good will"

Review:

The article discussed about the good will, the good will and its result; the good will and duty; and also the difference between *Hypothetical Imperative* and *Categorical Imperative*.

The good will is about how we handle ourselves, the gift of nature, our taken and gifts of future in doing what is good. The qualities are good and desirable as the qualities of temperant which means one's natural disposition, but if the will is not good and it creates harmful and bad effects to others, this is where the 'character' of a person comes in. But the feeling of being contended and it also completes your well being was called your 'happiness'. Good will is not good because of its effects but it is good by its willing to do or it is its nature itself. in any good will we do it always has its duty to perform. It was said that preserving one's life is a duty. We protect our life in conformity with duty and not from the motive of duty. Motive of duty is where you know that you should do this good act because it is part of your duty.

There's a difference between hypothetical imperative and categorical imperative. Hypothetical Imperative is what you don't know before and it contains before until the condition was given. While the Categorical Imperative, you know at once what it contains.

What I have learned:

- Good will is not always resulted from the good thigs we do
- We should be careful of our actions based on our maxim until the time it becomes a universal law

Integrative Question:

1. What is Good Will?
2. What is the difference between hypothetical and categorical?
3. How was happiness resulted?

Happiness and Virtue

Aristotle

What I expect to learn:

- To know how we can gain happiness
- To identify the relation of happiness to virtue

Quote:

"Happiness is the best, nobles, and most pleasant thing in the world"

Review:

Aristotle discussed happiness and virtue. According to him there are three prominent types of life; enjoyment life, political life and contemplative life. In gaining our own happiness there are certain factors that affects it like our significant others which is our families, friends, community and other people who has influenced to our lives. In connection to virtue some of our happiness was caused by it like happiness with virtue, or with practical wisdom but some is accompanied with pleasure or without pleasure. And also according to Aristotle virtuous actions must be in themselves pleasant therefore 'happiness' is the best, noblest and most pleasant thing in the world. This happiness was resulted to the good and right actions we do or portrait. It is when you do well or virtuous acts that you will find your happiness.

What I have learned:

- Happiness was one of the most important thing on earth
- Our significant others has the greatest contribution to our happiness
- Virtues entails happiness

Integrative Questions:

1. What is happiness?
2. How was it related to virtue?
3. What are the factors affecting out Happiness?

The Nature and Value of Rights

Joel Feiberg

What I Expect to Learn:

- know the value of rights
- know how to value rights
- identify the relation of Nature to Rights

Quote:

"A legal duty is not something we are implored or advised to do merely; it is something the law, or authority under the law requires us to do whether we want to or not, under a pain of penalty"

Review:

The article discussed several topics about duty and some notions of personal dessert and sovereign monopoly of rights. Before Feinberg go directly to the topic he makes the reader to imagine a world called 'Nowheresville', where no has the rights.

In this Article Feinberg integrated Kant's principle about 'moral worth'- that develops from the thought that is 'required by duty'. Here duty was also given importance in relation to Nature and Value of Rights. But before that he gave a brief introduction about the 'doctrine of logical correlativity of rights and duties'. And it was said that 1.) All duties entail other people's right, 2.) Rights entail other people's duties. This principle is somehow true base on a certain scenario. The bottom-line is duty is related to rights of other people and vice versa. Wherein duty is related to actions that are due someone else or an action that we must and requires as to do.

While discussing the duties, he also tackled the two notions about 'personal dessert' and 'sovereign monopoly of rights'. First the personal dessert is simply the fittingness between one person's character or action and another person's favorable response. In my understanding this first notion is simply giving back the goodness that the other person does to us or what we called 'gratitude'. In a certain scenario based on the article, if the deserved reward was not given the person has no right to complain because he only deserved the reward and he has no right to in claiming it. Second is the Sovereign Right-Monopoly. In this notion, the sovereign has the duty whether he will do good or bad in a person, but this duty was owed to God and not to the person directly. If the sovereign harm the person, that person can't complaint against his conduct because he was the one who ruled and has the power against them.

What I've learned:

- Duty are the things that is required or an action that we must do
- In personal dessert we have a choice in returning back the goodness that the other person gave to us or not, but since it is right to give response to the good thing the other has done and this is what we called the fittingness between two parties, the showing of 'gratitude'

Integrated Question:

1. What is duty?
2. What is personal Dessert?
3. What is Sovereign Right-Monopoly?
4. What is the doctrine of the logical correlativity of rights and duties?
5. In Personal Dessert notion, differentiate deserved reward and having a right to it?

Taking Rights Seriously

Ronald Dworkin

What I Expect to Learn:

- To know how we should take our rights seriously
- To identify some of our rights
- To know why we should take our rights seriously

Quote:

"...If people have a right to do something, then it is wrong to interfere with them"

Review:

In this article it discussed the "right" of a person. Every person has its own right. If you have the right to do something, it is wrong for someone to interfere with your rights. Dworkin in this ethical theory states the 'strong sense of right' where people can't interfere or hinder your certain rights to do something even if they think that it is the wrong thing to do. But these certain rights need to comply with a certain law. People have moral rights and these moral rights according to this theory were made into legal rights by the constitution. If people insist on their own strong sense of rights, believing that their rights are right or correct it will mean that the government or the law will do wrong if they stop a certain person from doing what he thinks is right..

Moral Rights and Legal Rights were compared to each other. If we say moral rights it is what we think is right and we should do this while legal rights are what the constitution or the government has imposed that every person should follow and have it equally. This Theory includes the involvement of the government of individual rights of a person. Since it's the government who sets and imposes the legal rights, they should not cheat instead they should take it seriously.

Things I've learned:

- The 'right' to do something is different from saying that it is the right thing to do
- Every person has its own moral rights but insisting your moral rights should correspond to the legal rights or constitution

Integrative Questions:

1. What is a strong sense?
2. What are legal rights?
3. What are moral rights?
4. Why does government need to take rights seriously?

A Theory of Justice

John Rawls

What I Expect To Learn:

- To know what is justice?
- To know how it affects the people?
- To know the importance of the theory?

Quote:

"In justice as fairness, the original position of equality corresponds to the state of nature in the traditional theory of the Social Contract"

Review:

In this theory, Rawls give importance to justice. According to Rawls justice have two principles" First "Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with similar liberty for others", Second principle talks to" Social and economic inequalities are to be managed so that they are both reasonably expected to be everyone's advantage and attached to positions and offices spent to all"

These two principles have own distinction. The first theory talks about the equal rights of the people when it comes to the basic liberties like political liberty, liberty of conscience, freedom of speech, freedom of thought and other privileges required to be all equal according to the first principle. And the second principle discussed the equal distribution of income and wealth. The designs of the organizations make use the differences in authority. This also set equal access to all. It was said in the article that " The theory of justice depends on the theory of society" which means in my perception that it depends on the society itself on how they will handle and imposed the justice that Rawls is trying to justify.

What I've learned:

- justice depends upon the theory of the society you belong
- Justice is all about fairness

Integrated Questions:

1. What are the two principle of justice?
2. How this two principle related to each other?

The Need for More than Justice

Annette Baier

What I expect to learn:

- to know why is there a need for justice
- to identify different kinds of justice
- to better understand the importance of justice

Quote:

"Those who have only recently won recognition of their equal rights, who have only recently seen the correction or partial correction of long-standing racist and sexist injustices to their race and sex, are among the philosophers now suggesting that justice in only one virtue among many and one that may need the presence of the others in order to deliver its own undenied value"

Review:

Annette Baier emphasizes in this theory that the best moral theory was one that harmonizes justice and care. Justice was taken from the notions of philosophers such as Kant and Rawls and from the viewpoint of Gilligan she found the notions of care. This two perspective should be considered as the best theory. It is only justice should indicate morals. For Baier justice perspective by itself is inadequate as a moral theory. Because of this it failed to notice the inequalities between people, the impractical views of freedom of choice and it ignores some important moral emotions such as love.

A certainly agree with Baier that sometimes justice is not enough to be a proof of having morals. We know that people want to have their own justices but sometimes it overlooks that instances that they can hurt people. Justice for Baier should be synchronizing with care so it will take into consideration the importance of moral emotions. Justice with care will help people to decide for the good of themselves and also for others. It will eliminate them from having discrimination or inequalities because they have the notions of justice and care for other people. We all know that people will do anything to gain justice but it we should do it in all fairness with other people because we also aim the same thing.

Justice and care is simply showing how you give value to others and also for yourself. If justice runs with care people will be aware that having justice is not enough if you got it from overpowering other people we should also take into consideration to care for other people because it is not only achieving justice can you earn happiness. I think this is what Baier was trying to convey to its reader as a philosopher.

What I've learned:

- Justice and care should go hand-in-hand to gain harmonious relationship with other people.
- Having justice with care it can stop people from taking advantage with others and having an inequalities and discrimination in the society.
- Justice will bring fairness to people

Integrative Questions:

1. Why should justice and care go hand-in-hand?
2. What are the effects of having justice and care harmonize?
3. Where did Baier get and come up with her notions?
4. What are the differences of justice from care?