

Contemporary
Moral
Problems 7th
edition

"The noble soul accepts the fact of his egoism without question, and also without consciousness of harshness, constraint, or arbitrariness therein, but rather as something that may have its basis in the primary law of things." - Nietzsche

A Student's
perspective
on
different
moral
theories

Dedication

To my loving and supportive parents

Noel and Grace Gamba

To my inexplicable brother

Joel Gamba

To my friends

And everyone that
Made an impact on my life
And influenced me to be
What I am now

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Contemporary Moral Problems

Chapter: Egoism and Moral Scepticism

Amazonlink:

<http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534517242>

What I expect to learn:

- To learn more about egoism and moral scepticism
- To learn about their importance in our lives

Quote:

"We should consider everyone who is capable of suffering, including non-human animals"

Book Review:

On this chapter, the author, James Rachels, discussed about the two popular ideas to attack conventional morality, Psychological and Ethical Egoism. Psychological Egoism states that all motives of people in doing things are only of self-interest, even if they say that what they are doing is for the sake of others, there is still something within them that is looking or wanting something for personal gain. While Ethical Egoism states that everyone has its own rational self-interest and that is what is good for them or us. The author mentioned that Psychological Egoism is incorrect and perplexed, because we can act in a way that is not unselfish and not self-intent.

What I have learned:

- I learned how to determine actions that may or may not be ethical to different perspectives

Integrative Question:

1. When do we need to help others?
2. What is the difference between ethical and psychological egoism?
3. What is morality?
4. What is moral skepticism?
5. What is egoism?

Contemporary Moral Problems

Chapter: Religion, Morality, and Conscience

Amazonlink:

<http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534517242>

What I expect to learn:

- To learn about the relationship between Religion, Morality, and Conscience

Quote:

“Even if we agree that God loves justice or kindness because of their nature, nor arbitrarily, there still remains a sense in which God could change morality even having rejected the divine command theory”

Book Review:

On this chapter, the author discussed about three arguments, Religion, Morality, and Conscience; he also mentioned how these three are related to each other. The author studied how morality has been thought to depend on religion, that religion motivates people who believe on it to do what is right, that religion gives guidance to people for their correct course of action, and that religion is essential to be right and wrong in some ways. The author mentioned that the nature of morality is to ask how a society will exist without any social moral code. This chapter tells the reader that the belief of “people needs religion to guide people to do the right thing and support them on their action” is incorrect. The author also discussed the Divine Command Theory, which tells us that God commands us to do the right thing, but that doesn't mean that anyone will do what is right and obey the divine command.

What I have learned:

- Morality and Religion influence each other
- Conscience defines what is morally correct

Integrative Question:

- 1 Is morality necessary for religion? And vice versa
- 2 Can we control conscience?
- 3 What is Divine Command Theory?
- 4 What is the link between Religion, Morality, and Conscience?
- 5 Is Divine Command Theory still effective at present?

Contemporary Moral Problems

Chapter: Master and Slave Morality

Amazonlink:

<http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534517242>

What I expect to learn:

- To learn the difference between master and slave morality
- To learn the reason why need a master and slave morality

Quote:

“The noble soul accepts the fact of his egoism without question, and also without consciousness of harshness, constraint, or arbitrariness therein, but rather as something that may have its basis in the primary law of things.”

Book Review:

On this chapter, the author argues that a healthy society should allow superior individuals to exercise their will power, their drive towards domination and exploitation of the inferior. The author said that the Superior person is from master morality and the weaker person is from the slave morality, that these two should be distinguished and be known in a society. That there are different kinds of people and they are being characterized whether they are strong or weak. He also said that there are evil and good men, selfish and warm hearted people that master and slave morality should have been classified by their characteristics.

Morality has suffered through the years. The battle for supremacy lingers at every corner. Some nations will pursue it, no matter what the cost. Millions have died in wars around the world. Billions have been injured. The numbers keeps on growing that, I think will remain constant. Many have tried to initiate a pursuit for world peace, but all of them have failed.

What I have learned:

- I have learned that there will always be a gap between master and slave

Integrative Question:

- 1 What is master morality?
- 2 What is slave morality?
- 3 Do we still see/experience this morality at present?
- 4 What is the difference between slave and master morality?
- 5 What is bad with slave morality?

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Chapter: Trying Out One's New Sword

Amazonlink:

<http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534517242>

What I expect to learn:

- To know the meaning of "trying out one's new sword"
- Maybe it means that we'll be testing someone's resolve to see if it will be able to withstand against all adversaries

Quote:

"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 understand people in other cultures to this extent. Otherwise a great mass of our most valuable thinking would be paralyzed"

Book Review:

This chapter entitled "trying out one's new sword" by the author, Mary Midgley, focuses on "Moral Isolationism", which means that it is wrong for us to criticize any other cultures that we do not fully understand. She further explained that it is wrong because it restricts the freedom of moral reasoning. One of her example, she pointed out that clothing depends on the culture of the country like in Japan, the Japanese samurai custom to try their new swords to any passerby to test if their sword is sharp enough to cut through a human body and for me cultures are very different to each person and we do not have the right to judge it until we get familiar to it. Real moral skepticism is said that can only lead to inaction. Isolating barriers simply cannot arise here. The author said that if we accept something as a serious moral truth about one culture, we cannot refuse to follow it. However, to other cultures as well, wherever circumstances admit it. If we refuse to do this, we're not just taking the other culture seriously.

What I have learned:

- We should respect other cultures, and criticizing them is immoral
- I learned what moral isolationism is as well as moral scepticism

Integrative Question:

- 1 Do we still have an isolated culture in the world?
- 2 Why do we need to interact with other cultures?
- 3 What benefit could it give us when we interact with other cultures?
- 4 How do we make other appreciate our culture?
- 5 What is moral skepticism?

Contemporary Moral Problems

Chapter: Utilitarianism

Amazonlink:

<http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534517242>

What I expect to learn:

- To learn more about what utilitarianism is
- To know the relationship between utilitarianism and morality

Quote:

"I have dwelt on this point, as being necessary part of a perfectly just conception of Utility or Happiness, considered as the directive rule of human conduct. But it is by no means an indispensable condition to acceptance of utilitarian standard; for that standard is not the agent's own greatest happiness, but the greatest amount of happiness altogether; and if it may possibly be doubted whether a noble character is always the happier for its nobleness, there can be no doubt that it makes other people happier, and that the world in general is immensely a gainer by it."

Book Review:

John Stuart Mill (May 20 1806 – May 8 1873), English philosopher, political theorist, political economist, civil servant and Member of Parliament, was an influential British Classical liberal thinker of the 19th century whose works on liberty justified freedom of the individual in opposition to unlimited state control. He was a proponent of utilitarianism, an ethical theory developed by Jeremy Bentham, although his conception of it was very different from Bentham's. Hoping to remedy the problems found in an inductive approach to science, such as confirmation bias, he clearly set forth the premises of falsification as the key component in the scientific method.

On this chapter, the author, John Stuart Mill, discussed that morality depends on how much happiness we can bring out by doing something. But we should consider that happiness or pleasure should also give benefit to the many. The author also mentioned that to do as you would be done by and to love your neighbor as yourself, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality. As the means of making the nearest approach to this ideal, utility would enjoin, first, that laws and social arrangements should place the happiness or the interest, of

every individual, as nearly as possible in harmony with the interest of the whole. Mill replied to an objection that Epicureanism is a doctrine worthy only of swine because he doesn't believe that everything is based on divine intervention. The higher pleasures in life according to Mill are the ones about intellect, imagination, and emotion. While the lower pleasures for example are the sexually related activities of human beings.

What I have learned:

- I learned that for us to give happiness and pleasure to anyone, we should start by thinking then acting for the benefit of others.

Integrative Question:

- 1 For you, what is happiness?
- 2 Then pain?
- 3 Is doing what is right, enough to give you pleasure?
- 4 What is utilitarian morality?
- 5 What is moral obligation?

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Stuart_Mill

Contemporary Moral Problems

Chapter: The Debate over utilitarianism

Amazonlink:

<http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534517242>

What I expect to learn:

- I am expecting to learn about the good side as well as the bad side of the theory of utilitarianism

Quote:

“The strength of utilitarianism is that it firmly resists ‘corruption’ by possibly irrational elements. By sticking to the Principle of Utility as the only standard for judging right and wrong, it avoids all danger of incorporating into moral theory prejudices, feelings, and ‘intuitions’ that have no rational basis.”

Book Review:

This chapter tackled three propositions: first proposition is when we judge our action based on what we know is right and wrong. Hedonism is about pleasure and nothing bad when your action is for pure pleasure because you are just satisfying you're needs as a human being. The response by the defenders of utilitarianism to hedonism is their two doctrines ‘the good and the right’.

Second proposition, when we think about the consequences of our action after we judge it and thus doing the right actions and to balance happiness over unhappiness. Utilitarianism is about pleasure that is right and good for the human being.

Third proposition is calculating the happiness and unhappiness that we feel after our action. Justice, rights, and promises are being done because they don't want to have scandals and riots. In short, justice, rights, and promises are done to have peace and order in the society. The act utilitarian considers the consequences of the act while the rule utilitarian considers the result if it follows the existing rules.

What I have learned:

- I learned that utilitarianism is not entirely good, there are also some bad sides

Integrative Question:

- 1 What is act-utilitarianism?
- 2 What is rule-utilitarianism?
- 3 Why should we know utilitarianism?
- 4 What is lacking with the principle of utilitarianism?
- 5 When do you think we should apply utilitarianism in our society?

Contemporary Moral Problems

Chapter: The Categorical Imperative

Amazonlink:

<http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534517242>

What I expect to learn:

- To learn the meaning of categorical imperative according to Kant

Quote:

“Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the time as an end...”

Book Review:

According to wikipedia, categorical imperative is the central philosophical concept in the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant, as well as the modern deontological ethics. The concept of the categorical imperative is a syllogism. The first premise is that a person acts morally if his or her conduct would, without condition, be the “right” conduct for any person in similar circumstances. The second premise is that conduct is “right” if it treats others as ends in themselves and not as means to an end. The conclusion is that a person acts morally when he or she acts as if his or her conduct was establishing a universal law governing others in similar circumstances.

On this chapter Kant also mentioned two versions of categorical imperative, first is hypothetical imperative which is about telling us what to do in order to achieve a particular goal, then the second version is about imperfect duty. The first imperative is about the standards dictated by the society while the second acknowledges the uniqueness of every individual.

What I have learned:

- I learned that there are two types of categorical imperative

Integrative Question:

- 1 What is good will?
- 2 What is categorical imperative?
- 3 What is the importance of knowing the first and second versions of categorical imperative?
- 4 Do you agree with Kant's ideals? Why or why not?
- 5 What are the morals worth of an action?

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Categorical_imperative

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Chapter: Happiness and Virtue

Amazonlink:

<http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534517242>

What I expect to learn:

- To learn Aristotle's definition of happiness and virtue and its relation to morality

Quote:

"...with regard to feelings of fear and confidence, courage is the mean; of the people who exceed, he who exceeds in fearlessness has no name, while the man who exceeds in confidence is rash, and he who exceeds in fear and falls short in confidence is a coward."

Book Review:

As what I read from Wikipedia, Aristotle considered ethics to be a practical rather than theoretical study, i.e. one aimed at doing good rather than knowing for its own sake. Aristotle taught that virtue has to do with the proper function (ergon) of a thing. An eye is only a good eye in so much as it can see, but because the proper function of an eye is sight. Aristotle reasoned that humans must have a function specific to humans, and that this function must be an activity of the soul in accordance with reason. Aristotle identified such an optimum activity of the soul as the aim of all human deliberate action, eudaimonia, generally translated as "happiness" or sometimes "well being". To have the potential of ever being happy in this way necessarily requires a good character, often translated as moral virtue.

On this chapter, Aristotle also mentioned about excess and deficiency, which means that we should know our limitation on being happy, that we should not do harm to ourselves and others when we pursue happiness.

What I have learned:

- I learned that happiness is pleasure, honor, or wealth.
- I learned that virtue acts as an intermediate, the mean in relation with excess and deficiency

Integrative Question:

- 1 What is happiness according to Aristotle?
- 2 What is virtue according to Aristotle?
- 3 What is the connection between happiness and virtue?
- 4 If someone is happy, is he morally correct in everything he does?
- 5 Why Aristotle sees human beings as beasts not humans?

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle>

Contemporary Moral Problems

Chapter: The nature and value of rights

Amazonlink:

<http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534517242>

What I expect to learn:

- To learn nature and value of rights and its importance in the society

Quote:

“In our age of organized labor, even this picture is now archaic; for almost every kind of exchange of service is governed by hard bargained contracts so that even bonuses can sometimes be demanded as a matter of right, and nothing is given for nothing on either side of the bargaining table. And perhaps that is a good thing; for consider an anachronistic instance of the earlier kind of practice that survives, at least as a matter of form, in the quaint old practice of ‘tipping’.”

Book Review:

From what I read at Wikipedia, Joel Feinberg was an American political and social philosopher known for his work in the fields of individual rights and the authority state. He was intentionally distinguished for his research in moral, social, and legal philosophy. His major four volume work, *The Moral Limits of Criminal Law*, was published between 1984 and 1988. Feinberg held many major fellowships during his career and lectured by invitation at universities around the world. He was an esteemed and highly successful teacher, and many of his students are now prominent scholars and professors at universities across the country.

Nowheresville has two views; first, what is the distinctive about rights is that they enable people to make claims. The doctrine of the logical correlativity of rights and duties assert that the people’s rights are linked with duties and other people. Second, rights are valuable because the ability to make claims is necessary for self-respect. To have claim-rights you must have duties to perform. The author explained that personal desert is kind of suitability of one to other people or party, this will result you being commended by other people.

What I have learned:

- I learned to give more importance to my rights as a human and a Filipino
- I learned that rights are important not only because we need it but it also gives a sense of security and discipline

Integrative Question:

- 1 What is right?
- 2 What is nature of rights?
- 3 When do know we did our duties?
- 4 When will be that right considered as wrong?
- 5 Will you survive in Nowheresville?

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joel_Feinberg

Contemporary Moral Problems

Chapter: Taking Rights Seriously

Amazon link:

<http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534517242>

What I expect to learn:

- To learn more about my rights
- To learn why should I take my rights seriously

Quote:

"The institution of rights against the Government is not a gift of God, or an ancient ritual, or a national sport. It is a complex and troublesome practice that makes the Government's job of securing the general benefit more difficult and more expensive, and it would be frivolous and wrongful practice unless served some point."

Book Review:

It has been argued that Dworkin's theory of social equality lacks tangible "bite" in that it does not adequately address obvious examples of governments that have failed to implement political systems that entitle every citizen to be respected. Many tangible, controversial and everyday wrongs have to be more visible to and subject to critique by someone like Dworkin who calls for "taking rights seriously".

Ronald Dworkin is an American philosopher of law and scholar of constitutional law. He is Jeremy Bentham Professor of Law and Philosophy at University College London, Frank Henry Sommer Professor of Law at New York University, and has taught previously at Yale Law School and the University of Oxford. An influential contributor to both philosophy of law and political philosophy, Dworkin received the 2007 Holberg International Memorial Prize in the Humanities for "his pioneering scholarly work" of "worldwide impact." His theory of law as

integrity is amongst the most influential contemporary theories about the nature of law. He advocates a “moral reading” of the United States Constitution.

The author stresses that we should see moral rights in a strong sense. The logic is protected by the U.S. constitution or the law which will protect us from immoral things that other people might do to us. The first model is about balance between the rights of the individual and the demands of the society. The second is to condense a right as much more serious as increasing one.

What I have learned:

- I learned that we SHOULD take rights SERIOUSLY

Integrative Question:

- 1 What is the law?
- 2 When will we know that we disobeyed the law?
- 3 Why should we take rights seriously?
- 4 How are things considered right?
- 5 Is knowing your rights really important?

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ronald_Dworkin

Contemporary Moral Problems

Chapter: A theory of justice

Amazonlink:

<http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534517242>

What I expect to learn:

- To learn what is a theory of justice

Quote:

"In justice as fairness the original position of equality corresponds to the state of nature in the traditional theory of the social contract. This original position is not, of course, thought of as an actual historical state of affairs, much less as a primitive condition of culture. It is understood as a purely hypothetical situation characterized so as to lead a certain conception of justice."

Book Review:

John Bordley Rawls was an American philosopher and a leading figure in moral and political philosophy. His work in political philosophy, dubbed Rawlsianism, takes as its starting point the argument that "most reasonable principles of justice are those everyone would accept and agree to from a fair position." Rawls employs a number of thought experiments – including the famous veil of ignorance – to determine what constitutes a fair agreement in which "everyone is impartially situated as equals," in order to determine principles of social justice.

The author appeals to the social contract. Justice as fairness is thus offered to people who are neither saintly altruists nor greedy egoists. Human beings are, as Rawls puts it, both rational and reasonable. Because we are rational we have ends we want to achieve, but we are reasonable insofar as we are happy to achieve these ends together if we can, in accord with mutually acceptable regulative principles. Rawls gives us a model of a fair situation for making

this choice (his argument from the original position and the famous veil of ignorance), and he argues that two principles of justice would be especially attractive.

Rawls held that these principles of justice apply to the “basic structure” of fundamental social institutions, a qualification that has been the source of some controversy and constructive debate. Rawls further argued that these principles were to be lexically ordered, thus giving priority to basic liberties over the more equality-oriented demands of the second principle. Finally, Rawls took his approach as applying in the first instance to what he called a “well-ordered society designed to advance in the good of its members and effectively regulated by a public conception of justice”. In this respect he understood justice as fairness as a contribution to “ideal theory,” working out principles that characterize a well-ordered society under favorable circumstances” Much recent work in political philosophy has asked what justice as fairness might dictate for problems of “partial compliance” under “nonideal theory”.

What I have learned:

- This reading reinforced my perception that all people does not think the same
- I learned about the two principles of justice

Integrative Question:

- 1 What is justice?
- 2 What is the theory of justice?
- 3 Why do we need to have equality?
- 4 What are the two principles of justice?
- 5 When does equality should be considered?

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Rawls

Contemporary Moral Problems

Chapter: The need for more than justice

Amazonlink:

<http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534517242>

What I expect to learn:

- To learn what is ethical and what is not is the justice system

Quote:

"If forcing a man to testify against himself, or forbidding him to speak, does the damage that the rights against self-incrimination and the right of free speech assume, then it would be contemptuous for the state to tell a man that he must suffer this damage against the possibility that other men's risk for loss may be marginally reduced."

Book Review:

Annette C. Baier is a well-known moral philosopher and Hume scholar, focusing in particular on Hume's moral psychology. She is well known for her contributions to feminist philosophy and to the philosophy of mind, where she was strongly influenced by her former colleague, Wilfrid Sellars. Her husband is philosopher Kurt Baier.

The author's approach to ethics is that women and men make their decisions about right and wrong based on different value systems: men take their moral decisions according to an idea of justice, while women are motivated by a sense of trust or caring. The history of philosophy having been overwhelmingly compiled by men, she suggests, leads to a body of thought which apparently ignores the role of nurture and trust in human philosophy.

Justice as fairness and was given to us and we should protect this. We need to know and renew and apply those values of the past to our present.

What I have learned:

- I learned that justice should be given to people
- I learned that unanimity is required for a better society

Integrative Question:

- 1 What is a right?
- 2 What is equality?
- 3 Is it a right to have equality?
- 4 Is everything right for us just?
- 5 How can we know if things are just?

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annette_Baier