

## **ETHICS: FOUNDATIONS OF MORAL VALUATION**

### **ACTIVITIES CHAPTER 6 (DEONTOLOGY)**

Directions: Do the following activities below. Read first the paragraph below then answer the following questions.

Read First!!!

#### ***Whistle-Blowing and the Duty of Speaking Truth to Power***

Whistle-Blowing and the Duty of Speaking Truth to Power Business ethics is a field of applied moral philosophy wherein the principles of right and wrong (as we are learning about deontology, virtue ethics, utilitarianism, among others) are made pertinent and relevant to the workplace. Just because the primary purpose of business is the proverbial bottom-line called profit, it does not mean that profit is the only motive. More and more people are realizing that to make a business sustainable, we need to make decisions that balance a triple bottom-line; namely, people, planet, and profit. This requires that we must improve our competence in decision-making that calibrates benefits for the stakeholders (people), the environment (planet), and the investors (profit). Often, those business decision-makers who do everything, especially the illegal and immoral acts to maximize profit in a single-minded way, somehow harm their company's long-term sustainability. For example, they may lose customers if they produce substandard goods and services just to make short-term profit. On the other hand, their employees might keep resigning and they have to continuously hire new people because the compensation is not fair and just. They lose money in the long-term because they spend more for training costs because they pay below minimum wage salaries therefore hiring employees that lack certain qualities they need for their company. Thus, there is a place for ethical principles in business, insofar as a business decision-maker's goal is sustainability and not merely profit. But what can someone in the workplace do in the face of unethical business practices? Recent history in the Philippines has witnessed many controversial whistleblowers. Names such as Primitivo Mijares, Heidi Mendoza, and Rodolfo Lozada Jr. have become part of the narratives of different ethical scandals in the past few decades. But what is whistle-blowing? We can consider it as a kind of speaking truth to power. It happens often in the workplace that an authority figure violates a law or makes an unethical decision, such as bribery or extortion, deception, and exploitation of labor, among others. When it happens that an authority figure instructs a subordinate to do an unethical act, the subordinate may not agree with undertaking the act if he wants to live by certain moral principles. There is a problem that arises here. On one hand, the subordinate must follow the instructions of the authority figure because the employer-employee contract binds the subordinate to follow the orders of the authority figure. To do otherwise would be insubordination, which can be grounds for termination. He could lose his job. On the other hand, if the unethical act that is instructed by the authority figure is clearly against the principles of the subordinate, can he refuse to do it without fear of losing his job? In this problematic scenario, the subordinate needs to find a solution. Whistle blowing is one way of making an ethical intervention.

However, the whistle-blowers that we named above resorted to one kind of whistle-blowing; namely, exposing the wrong doing externally either by testifying in a public panel

or by going to mass media such as a radio announcer or journalist. While external whistle-blowing can be effective, it is not the only manner by which a subordinate can blow the whistle against an erring authority figure. Here are three other intervention methods: (1) secretly informing a higher authority figure (the "boss of the boss") about the unethical act, (2) writing an anonymous letter to the authority figure threatening to expose the wrongdoing, and (3) collaborating with like-minded colleagues to sabotage the undertaking of the unethical act and to prevent it from being done. It takes a strong moral character to stand up to authority in the spirit of doing the right thing. But more than moral character, it is important to be wise and clever in choosing which intervention method to use in order to uphold one's moral principles.

1. Go online and look for news items on whistle-blowers. Identify the crime or unethical act that they are exposing as well as the perpetrators of the crime. Detail your findings and opinion below.

- Heidi Mendoza is a former auditor for the Commission on Audit. The scenario: Following the filing of plunder accusations against former military comptroller Carlos Garcia, then Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo began to investigate military transaction anomalies in 2004. He chose Heidi Mendoza to head the investigative team because he regarded her as "a person with not just honesty but also ability." According to Inquirer.net, he remembered a team headed by Mendoza earlier submitting a "full" and "thorough" audit of the Makati government despite allegedly getting death threats and harassment. The shocking revelation: Mendoza began February of this year by testifying before the House of Representatives that, contrary to the government prosecutor's position, there was substantial evidence against Garcia. She said that her team discovered P50 million unaccounted for in a transaction involving a pay cheque for P200 million. Because she believed in the evidence against Garcia, she and the state prosecutors even threatened to run naked through the streets of Quezon City if his case was dropped. Despite her concerns for her family's safety, she said that she chose to testify "because of (her) dedication to (her) duty as a public auditor."

2. Reconcile these two topics: our discussion of autonomy and the duty to "speaking truth to power." Suppose you are already working for a company and your boss tells you that you should offer a bribe to a government agent to obtain permit to build and operate a factory in a province. What would you do? What are your alternatives if you believe that it is wrong to bribe government agencies?

- First and foremost, I would refuse to perform anything that is obviously unlawful. Bribes are prohibited in the payment of any government agent for any purpose. Second, I would discuss this event with his or her supervisor as well as Human Resources. If I get unfavorable findings from either, I will submit a complaint and begin searching for a new employment at a different business. This is because I do not want to be forced to perform anything unlawful or immoral as part of my job.

What exactly is business ethics?

- Previously regulated economies required their governments to regulate and control business organizations and economic institutions through law and government mechanisms in order for them to play their role in contributing to the growth and well-being of their stakeholders in a balanced manner, thereby protecting the interests of almost all people. Various business management concepts, principles, theories, practices, goals, and strategies have been evaluated, revalidated, and constantly changed as a result of massive liberation, privatization, and globalization of business that began at the end of the twentieth century and accelerated at the beginning of the twenty-first. Governments, which were previously responsible for safeguarding customers' interests in terms of quality, price, safe and timely delivery of the product, and so on, protecting companies from unhealthy competition, limiting the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few that should otherwise be enjoyed by the majority of the population, and so on, relegated and shifted the responsibility to business organizations.

3. Consider other topics in the field of business ethics. Select one and give a presentation of the significance of discussing this topic.

- Ethical behavior increases not just profits but also company relationships and staff productivity. Business ethics is concerned with how businessmen conduct themselves while doing business. Unethical business activities cause difficulties for company owners and units.

4. In what way does a rational will distinguish a human being from an animal insofar as the animal is only sentient?

- Humans are highly developed creatures that have spent millennia building realities about our unique identities. Humans are fortunate, beautiful, and terrifying all at the same time. Individual conceptions of self that are based on erroneous constructions lead to insanity. We may all agree that our scientific reality is more essential than the false gods we've built and continue to let to guide the path of human development. We are all faced with the problem of liberating oneself from self-imposed false constructions.

5. What is the difference between autonomy and heteronomy? What does autonomy have to do with free will in contrast to animal impulse?

- The distinction between autonomy and heteronomy is that heteronomy refers to a community's political submission to the authority of another power or an external law, while autonomy refers to self-government; the ability to act or operate freely.

Humans have freewill autonomy when they may behave at their own choice without being influenced by others. Animal instinct, on the other hand, is a spontaneous unmediated tendency that is neither logical nor intuitive.

6. How does the method called universalizability work? What are the steps to test if an action is rationally permissible?

- Universalizability is based on the application of concepts to which it may be said that everyone should judge or behave in the same manner. In other words, they are not biased by any specific viewpoint.

7. What is meant by enlightenment morality as opposed to paternalism? Why is deontology a kind of enlightenment morality?

- Enlightenment morality is your responsibility because you are creation, not someone inserted into it as a separate entity. Paternalism is nonsense, since if we were an enlightened bunch of human beings, which I doubt, we would nip the baloney of those who regard us as less than themselves. We do not threaten those in authority; instead, we enable them to remain in their positions and continue to perpetrate heinous acts of corruption on the people for whom they serve.