

MIDTERM NOTES: ETHICS

INTRODUCTION

- **Ethics** – derived from the Greek word “ethos” which means custom or a manner of acting and behaving or in simple phrase “way of living.”
 - It is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with human conduct, more specifically the behavior of individuals in society.
 - Ethics are usually based on logical reasoning and shared values and tend to be more objective.
 - **Morality** – is a system of belief about what is right behavior and wrong behavior and is usually based on an individual’s personal beliefs and values.
 - Morality is the praxis or the practice of those principles.
 - Morals refer to an individual’s own principles regarding right and wrong.
 - Morality is often based on gut instinct or religious beliefs and is often culture-specific.
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- **General Ethics** – mainly deals with the morality of human acts – its major elements or constituents and modifiers, the norms of morality (law and conscience), and the specific determinants of morality (major sources of morality).
 - **Applied Ethics** – essentially applies the specific and fundamental norms and principles of general ethics in various specific areas of human life and activity, both in the individual and social domain.
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- **Moral Principles** – is an important feature of morality.
 1. **Prescriptivity** – this refers to the practical, or action-guiding nature of morality. Moral principles are generally put forth as some kind of commands or imperatives.
 2. **Impartiality** – this means that an ethical or moral rule should be neutral when it comes to the question as to who are its recipients. To be impartial is to treat everyone alike, no one gets special treatment.
 3. **Overridingness** – moral standards must have hegemony. This means that moral principles or standards should reign supreme over all the other standards or norms of valuation, whatever they may be.
 4. **Autonomous From Arbitrary Authority** – moral standards should be independent, hence be able to stand on its own, regardless of what the majority of people say and decide that something is moral or immoral.
 5. **Publicity** – This means that moral rules and principles must be made public if they are to serve as clear guidelines to our actions.
 6. **Practicability** – Moral rules should not be impossible to achieve or else they are not for men but for angels. They must be “workable” and not too “idealistic.”
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- **Act of Man** – refers to those acts of which man has no control like emotions, circulation of the blood, the pumping of the heart, grinding of the stomach and breathing. Hence involuntary.
 - **Human Act** – refers to the actions which are within the control of man like walking, talking, thinking, eating and biting. They are deliberate; hence they are voluntary acts.
 - **Essential Elements of Human Act:**
 1. **Knowledge** – Where the doer is aware of what he/she is doing.
 2. **Freedom** – in which the act is not done by force.
 3. **Will** – Of which the doer has given his or her consent to the act.

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- **Voluntariness** – from the Latin word “voluntas” refers to the act of the will. Without the action of the will, an act is considered involuntary, hence the doer cannot be held liable for his action. Only the act that proceeds from the command of the will is voluntary.
 1. **Four Kinds of Voluntariness:**
 1. **Perfect voluntariness** – where all elements of human act are present.
 2. **Imperfect voluntariness** – where knowledge is absent.
 3. **Simple voluntariness** – it is simply doing and not doing the act since one cannot do anything about it.
 4. **Conditional voluntariness** – this is when the person is forced to do an act in which in normal condition it should not be done.
 - Thus, morality of an act can be moral, immoral, or amoral. **Moral** if it is a good act. **Immoral** if it is bad. If it is indifferent or neither good or bad, then it's **amoral**.
 - **Determinants of Morality:**
 1. **The object or the act itself** – refers to the deed done by the doer of the action.
 2. **Motive or the intent** – the purpose or reason behind the act.
 3. **Circumstances** – situations that surround the commission of the act.
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- **Aggravating moral circumstance** – is committed by the agent or doer in different situations when there is an element of added factors contributing to the first or initial action.
 - **Mitigating moral circumstance** – is understood as lessening or diminishing the supposed moral gravity of the crime.
 - **Justifying moral circumstance** – self-defense is the best example of this. The act is justified – as if no moral offense is committed.
 - **Exempting moral circumstance** – amoral or no moral significant – focuses not on the action but the doer. Ex: mentally challenged person
 - **Modifiers of Human Action:**
 1. Ignorance
 2. Concupiscence
 3. Fear
 4. Violence
 5. Habits
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- **Moral Norm** - is used to measure whether an act done is good or bad, right or wrong, moral or immoral. It is a rule or standard in gauging the goodness or badness of an act.
 - **Types of Moral Norms**
 1. **Eternal Divine Law** – objective and absolute norm of morality. It is governed by divine reason that reveals the necessary relations between creator and the creatures.
 1. **Eternal Law** – is made known to man through his reason and conscience, also known as the natural law. By his rational nature, man is able to know what is right and wrong.
 2. **Moral Law** – is ordinance of reason promulgated by those who have the authority and care of the community for the promotion of the common good.
 3. **Human Law** – laws enacted by men. It includes precepts not only in the government but also in private agencies as in the church.
 2. **Human Reason** – this is related to a person's conscience which is the proximate norm of morality telling a person internally what to do and should not do.
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- **Dilemma** - is a situation in which a difficult choice has to be made between two or more alternatives, especially equally undesirable ones.

- **Three Levels of Moral Dilemma**

1. **Personal moral dilemma** – is when your decision is the cause of either your own; that of another person; or a group of people's potential harm.
 2. **Organizational moral dilemma** – is when a member or members of the organization is in a situation where there is a moral conflict, and the decision will potentially harm either some members of the group or the entire organization.
 3. **Structural moral dilemma** – is when a person or group of persons who holds high level positions in the society faces a moral conflicting situation wherein the entire social system is affected.
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- **Erroneous Conscience** - refers to a situation where an individual's judgment about what is right or wrong is mistaken. This can happen due to a lack of information, misinformation, misunderstanding, or a distorted moral perspective.

- **Types of Erroneous Conscience:**

1. **Invincibly erroneous conscience** – a kind of judgment where mistake cannot be avoided regardless of the effort or attempt exerted to correct such.
 2. **Visibly erroneous conscience** – a person is morally accountable since the error could have been avoided with ordinary diligence on his/her part.
 3. **Perplexed conscience** – this kind of judgment happens when a person has two alternative options but fears that bad consequences are present in both choices that either way, he/she feels doomed, the person must postpone any action in making a choice.
 4. **Pharisaical conscience** – here the person magnifies small offenses as grave and serious ones as little.
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- **Firm Conscience** - refers to a well-informed and morally grounded judgment about right and wrong. He/she has carefully considered ethical principles, values, and consequences before making moral decisions.

- **Types of Firm Conscience:**

1. **Certain conscience** – the judgment is sure that the action is morally good or bad.
 2. **Doubtful conscience** – the person hesitates in making a particular judgment.
 3. **Scrupulous conscience** – very cautious or extremely fearful that the person involved does not want to make any action in a given situation.
 4. **Lax conscience** – a person takes a serious bad act very lightly and considers it morally acceptable.
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- **Moral Standard** - is a code of what is right or wrong without reference to specific behaviors or beliefs. Moral standards deal with matters that the person thinks have serious consequences.

- **Non-Moral Standards** - can be considered as relative standards by which something or someone is judged as either good or bad. For example, when you wear a sleeveless shirt and shorts on a very formal occasion – in this situation you violated the non-moral standard.

- **Other Rules in Life**

1. **Etiquette** – is a set of rules on how an individual should responsibly behave in society. For example, table manners.
2. **Policy** – is a clear, simple statement on how an organization plans to handle its services, actions, or business. For example, No ID, No Entry School policy.
3. **Law** – is a rule created and enforced by the government and its agencies to maintain order, resolve disputes, and protect a person's liberty and rights.
4. **Commandment** – is a rule that to be strictly observed because it was said to be set by a divine entity, such as those in the Ten Commandments.

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- According to **St. Thomas Aquinas**, the fundamental difference between animal ethics and human ethics is that animals behave instinctively while human behavior is rational.

- **Instinctive behavior** – is a hard-wired, inborn, characteristic response to specific environment stimuli; an example is the altruistic behavior of a social animal.
- **Rational behavior** – is a decision-making process where the person acts in ways that best achieve his or her needs in accordance with their set preferences.

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- **Freedom** - is the foundation of moral acts. For a person to be called a moral person, he or she must be free. Freedom is the ability to make significant choices, and according to **Gabriel Marcel**, it is a gift given to us by God.
 - **Jean Paul Sarte** said “you are free” because he believed a person always has a choice. Thus, according to Sarte, you must choose. His idea was that freedom is the capacity to choose, that even not choosing is a choice. Freedom sets the human person apart from other creatures.
 - **Philosophical Insights on Freedom**
 - Freedom is a gift
 - Freedom is complementary to Reason
 - Freedom is absolute (in a person's level)
 - Freedom demands responsibility

CHAPTER 1: THE MORAL AGENT

- **Culture** - is a complex phenomenon. It contains nearly all aspects of shared human experiences.
 - **Emile Durkheim (Father of Sociology)** - asserted that culture has the power over individuals to create beliefs, such as belief in God. He added that with more people holding the same beliefs, social order is also strengthened.
 - **How Does Culture Affect Human Behavior?**
 1. Culture shapes our values.
 2. Culture shapes our beliefs.
 3. Culture shapes our norms.
 - **Five Elements of Culture**
 1. **Symbols** – can be anything that a group of people find meaningful.
 2. **Language** – is a complex symbol system that enables human beings to communicate either verbally or through writing.
 3. **Beliefs** – are assumptions or convictions held to be true by an individual or a group of people.
 4. **Values** – are culturally acceptable standards or behavior.
 5. **Norm** – is an informal guideline by a particular group of people or social unit about what is considered normal or correct/incorrect social behavior.
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- **Plato's** "The Republic" is a significant dialogue where he delves into the concept of justice and why it is beneficial for individuals to be just. The dialogue outlines the organization of an ideal state with three social classes: **rulers**, **guardians**, and **producers**. These classes correspond to the three parts of an individual's soul: **reason**, **spirit**, and **appetite**. Plato argues that political justice is achieved when each class fulfills its role without encroaching on the roles of others. Plato, cited three critical elements that jointly influence the human person's moral development:
 1. Native traits (genetic characteristics)
 2. Early childhood experience
 3. One's cultural surroundings
- **Karl Marx** - viewed culture as part of the **superstructure of society**, influenced by the dominant material relationships in a capitalist system. He argued that culture, including religious ideas, serves to maintain the norms and values that support the existing social order. Marx highlighted how the ruling class shapes culture to perpetuate its dominance, with religion and other cultural elements reinforcing class distinctions.

- **Cultural Relativism** - refers to the idea that values, knowledge, and behavior of people must be understood within its own cultural context, and not by the standards of other cultures.
- **Dr. James Rachels** - laid out five claims of cultural relativists as to why right or wrong is only a matter of cultural standards:
 1. Different societies have different moral codes.
 2. The moral code of a society determines what is right or wrong. There is no objective standard considered better than others.
 3. There are no universal moral truths.
 4. The moral code of a particular society has no special status. It is one among many.
 5. It is arrogant for one culture to judge another culture. There should be tolerance among cultures.

- **Peace** - is a set of beliefs, values, attitudes, traditions, and modes of behavior and ways of life based on:
 - respect for life
 - respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms
 - rejection of all forms of violence
 - adherence to principles of justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, diversity, dialogue, and understanding in all levels of society.
- **Three Phases to Accomplish Peace**
 - **Cognitive phase** - understanding and being aware to the happenings in the society
 - **Affective phase** - being concerned and responsible learning to value peace since rational beings are species of social interaction.
 - **Active phase** - practical action in which a course that will lead us to what is good for the benefit of the majority.
- **Two Types of Peace**
 - **Negative Peace** – absence of direct/physical violence
 - Direct peace – war, torture, child and woman abuse
 - **Positive Peace** – presence of conditions of well-being and just relationships:
 - Economic, political, and ecological
 - Structural Violence – poverty, hunger
 - Socio-cultural violence – racism, sexism, religious intolerance
 - Ecological violence – pollution, overconsumption
- **Six Dimensions and Operative Values: Promoting a Culture of Peace** By Archbishop Antonio Ledesma, SJ
 - Personal and Family (Spiritual)
 - Human rights and Democracy (justice)

- Poverty eradication (Compassion)
- Intercultural understanding and Solidarity (Dialogue)
- Disarmament and Cessation of Hostilities (Active/non-violence)
- Environmental Protection (Stewardship)
- **Peace Education** - is broadly defined as education that seeks the transformation of people's mindsets, attitudes and behaviors toward peace, justice and environmental care.
- **Universal values** - are a set of core principles or beliefs that are shared by people across different cultures, societies, and historical periods.
- **Three Universal Values shared by all cultures**
 - Caring for the young
 - Murder is wrong
 - Tell the truth

- **Moral** - is concerned with the principles of right and wrong behavior or the goodness and badness of human character.
- **Character** - is defined as the mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual. In Philosophy, character usually denotes the moral dimension of a person.
- **Moral Character** - refers to the existence (or lack of) virtues such as integrity, courage, fortitude, honesty, and loyalty. Thus, moral character traits are rational, informed, stable and reliable disposition.

- **Confucian Traditions** - moral development was attributed to "four beginnings" of human personality.
- **Four Beginnings:**
 1. The heart of compassion, which leads to **Jen**. It means goodwill, sympathy towards others, and generosity.
 2. The heart of righteousness, which leads to **Yi**. It means righteousness and respect of duty, that is, respect your decision as a guardian towards nature and humanity.
 3. The heart of propriety, which leads to **Li**. It deals with outward behavior such as etiquette, customs, and rituals.
 4. The heart of wisdom, which leads to **Zhi**. It means wisdom, and this wisdom is a product of practicing Jen, Yi and Li in one's life.
- **Aristotle and Virtue Ethics - Virtue Ethics** is an approach that reduces the emphasis on rules, consequences, and particular acts. Instead, virtue ethics focus on the quality of the person. It is more concerned with whether the person who is acting as a virtuous person should act in the situation.
- **The Doctrine of Golden Mean** - the principle of being virtuous – that moral behavior is the one that is in the middle of two extreme behaviors, In philosophy, it is an approach to ethics that emphasizes finding the appropriate medium, or middle ground, between extremes. The phrase golden mean is most frequently applied to the ethical ideas described by the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle.

- **Eudaimonia** – can be translated to "happiness", "well-being", or the "good life" and that this is the goal of human life.
- **Lawrence Kolberg's Stages of Moral Development**
 - **Level 1: Preconventional Morality**
 - Stage 1: Punishment-Obedience orientation
 - Stage 2: Reward Orientation

- **Level 2: Conventional Morality**
 - Stage 3: Good boy/girl Orientation
 - Stage 4: Authority Orientation
- **Level 3: Post Conventional Morality**
 - Stage 5: Social Contract Orientation
 - Stage 6: Ethical – Principle Orientation

CHAPTER 2: THE ACT

- **David Hume** - Scottish philosopher, historian, economist, and essayist known especially for his philosophical empiricism and skepticism.
 - **David Hume's Four Theses**
 1. Reason alone cannot be a motive to the will, but rather is the "slave of the passions".
 2. Moral distinctions are not derived from reason.
 3. Moral distinctions are derived from the moral sentiments: feelings of approval and feelings of disapproval felt by spectators who contemplate a character trait or action.
 4. While some virtues and vices are natural, others are artificial.
 - **Hume's Theory of the Mind** - Humans have what we call passions. It can be direct passion or indirect passion.
 1. **Direct passions** - are caused directly by the sensation of pain or pleasure.
 2. **Indirect passions** - are caused by the sensation of pain or pleasure derived from some other idea or impression.
 - **Max Ferdinand Scheler** - a German philosopher known for his work in phenomenology, ethics, and philosophical anthropology. For Scheler, emotion is the most important aspect in human existence and it exists even if you have not experienced it before. He asserted that feelings are the purest sphere of human consciousness.
 - **Four Strata of Feelings**
 1. **Sensual feelings** – involves bodily pleasure or pain.
 2. **Vital feelings** – involves life functions such as health, sickness, fatigue.
 3. **Psychic feelings** – are about aesthetics, justice, and knowledge
 4. **Spiritual feelings** – deal with the divine
 - **Dr. James Rachel** - he asserted that in moral reasoning, you could not rely on your feelings no matter how powerful these feelings may be. Feelings can be irrational and merely a product of your prejudice, selfishness, or cultural conditioning.
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- **Reason** - is the power of the mind to think, understand, and form judgments by a process of logic.
 - **Immanuel Kant** - argued that reason alone is the basis of morality and once the person understood this basic requirement for morality, he or she would see that acting morally is the same as acting rationally.
 - **Impartiality** - denotes those decisions should be based on objective criteria rather than on the basis of bias, prejudice, or preferring to benefit one person over another for improper reasons." An impartial choice involves basing your decision on how all the persons in the situation will be affected, and not to the advantage of a particular party that you favor.
 - **Moral Courage** - is the courage to put your moral principles into action even though you may be in doubt, are afraid, or face adverse consequences. It involves careful deliberation and mastery of the self.

- **Will** - is the mental capacity to act decisively on one's desire. It is the faculty of the mind to initiate action after coming to a resolution following careful deliberation.
- **Moral Imagination** - is the ability in particular circumstances to discover and evaluate possibilities not merely determined by the circumstance, or limited by its operative mental mode or merely framed by a set of rules or rule-governed concerns.

PREPARED BY SHANNERY CUTIE