

QUEZON CITY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF COMPUTER STUDIES

WEEK 2

COMMON

ETHICAL THEORIES

SPI101 - SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL ISSUES
1ST SEMESTER



LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Discuss and differentiate the different ethical theories;
- Determine the ethical theory which is the most appropriate to be applied by a person in a particular scenario;
- Demonstrate the appropriate usefulness of a specific ethical theory in a given case;

INTRODUCTION

The term “*ethics*” broadly describes the way in which we look and understand life, in terms of good or bad or right or wrong.

It is a branch of knowledge that deals with moral principles. Moral theories are frameworks we use to justify or clarify our position when we ask ourselves “*what should I do in this situation*” or “*what is right or wrong for me?*”

I. RELATIVISM

Relativism is the theory that there is no universal moral norm of right and wrong.

Two particular kinds of relativism:

1.1 Subjective Relativism

1.2 Culture Relativism

I. RELATIVISM

1.1 Subjective Relativism

Holds that each person decides right or wrong for himself/herself. This notion is captured in the popular expression “*What’s right for you may not be right for me.*”

1.2 Cultural Relativism

Is the ethical theory that the meaning of “right” and “wrong” rests with society’s actual moral guidelines. The guidelines vary widely from place to place and from time to time.

II. DIVINE COMMAND THEORY

The divine command theory is based on the idea that good actions are those aligned with the will of God and bad actions are those contrary to the will of God. Since the Holy Book contains God's directions, we can use Holy Books as moral decision-making guides, God says we should respect our mothers and fathers, so respecting our parents is good.

The divine command theory is based on OBEDIENCE, not REASON.

III. ETHICAL EGOISM

Ethical egoism is the philosophy that each person should focus exclusively on his or her self interest. In other words, according to ethical egoism, the morally right action for a person to take in a particular situation is the action that will provide that person with the maximum long-term benefit.

Ethical egoism does not prohibit acting to help someone else, but assisting another is the right thing to do only if it serves one's own long-term best interest.

III. ETHICAL EGOISM

Can you think of acts which will NOT benefit the doers? You may say:

1. If there is only one bread for a mother and her child, the mother may deprive herself of the bread and allows her child to consume the bread;
2. The father will always work overtime just to provide the needs of his family;
3. One of the siblings may volunteer to stop studying so that his other siblings may continue studying because their parents cannot afford to send them to school simultaneously.

IV. CONSEQUENTIALISM

“The end will justify the means.”

In consequentialism, the consequence of an action justifies the moral acceptability of the means taken to reach that end. It is the consequence of an action which determines whether or not the action is moral.

Jeremy Bentham was an early and influential advocate of utilitarianism, the dominant consequentialist position. A utilitarian believes in “the greatest happiness for the greatest number.” The more people who benefit from a particular action, the greater its good.

V. KANTIANISM

Deontology or **Kantianism** is an obligation-based theory whose chief author was Immanuel Kant, who lived in the 18th century. This theory emphasizes the type of action rather than the consequences of that action.

Deontologists believe that moral decisions should be made based on one's duties and the rights of others.

V. KANTIANISM

According to Kant, morality is based on pure reason. As people have the innate ability to act rationally, they, therefore, must act morally, irrespective of personal desires. Another way of stating Kant's theory is "Act morally regardless of the consequences."

The Philippine Congress and the Kantianism Theory

From the three branches of our Government, it is the Congress who has the duty to make and/or repeal laws, while the Executive Branch has the duty to execute and implement it. The Judiciary of course, has the sole power to interpret the law.

However, the highest and fundamental law of the land has commanded and mandated this Congressmen and Senators to specifically enact a law.

The Philippine Congress and the Kantianism Theory

Article III, Section 26 of the Philippine Constitution provides:

Section 26. The State shall guarantee equal access to opportunities for public service and prohibit political dynasties as may be defined by law.

The above provision of the Constitution is NOT a self-executing provision.

It means it cannot be implemented without an enabling law. From 1987 up to this year, 2015, or after 28 years, no Senator or Congressman was able to sponsor a law which shall prohibit political dynasty in our country!!!

VI. PERSUASIVE POWER OF ETHICS AND THE LAW

It cannot be denied that the persuasive power of ethics and morals to every person is weak compared to the persuasive power of the law.

To illustrate, suppose you are inside your house having a siesta, when suddenly someone knocked at your door. Upon opening your door, you suddenly saw an old woman with stain of blood in her head and asked for your help. You have the money, you have a car, you have a helper in your house wherein you could pass to him the duty of sending the old woman to the hospital. In other words, you could help her if you wanted to. Undoubtedly, helping her is the right thing to do. It is a kind act, a little less than the good Samaritan taught by Jesus to his disciples. Although helping the weak woman is undoubtedly a good act, nine (9) out of ten (10) people will NOT help her.

The next day, you received a letter from the Bureau of Internal Revenue which informed you of your failure to declare other incomes you received from the previous year. At the end of the letter, the BIR said,

VI. PERSUASIVE POWER OF ETHICS AND THE LAW

"Failure on your part to act accordingly will compel us to charge you of criminal offense!"

You immediately acted and paid the necessary taxes because you didn't want to be criminally prosecuted and be imprisoned!

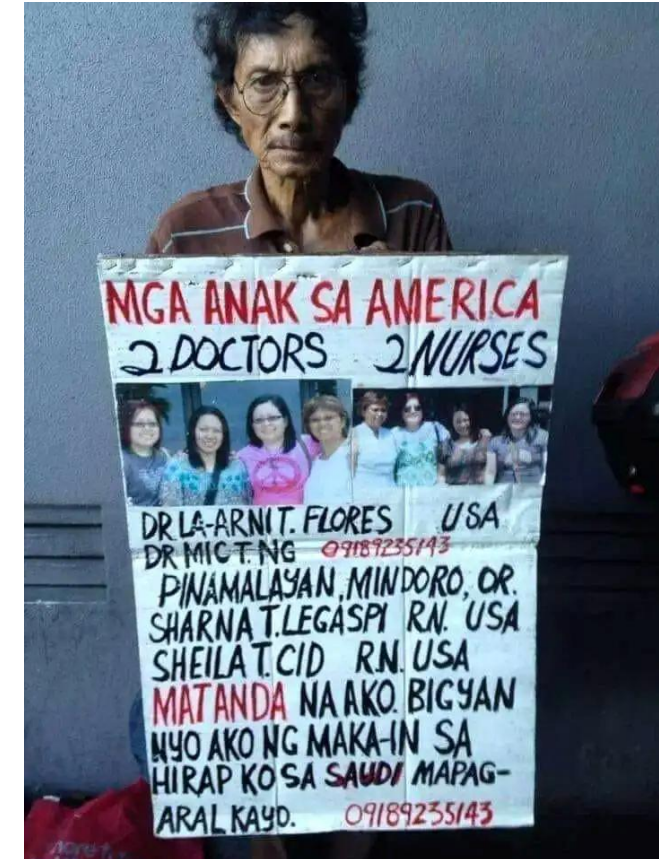
The mere fact that we enter into a contract of agreement with others prove that we do not rely on people will act morally and ethically in all circumstances.

To illustrate, let us say A borrows one million pesos (P 1,000,000) from B. It is natural for B to demand from A something that will ensure B that he will be paid in the near future. Thus, B may demand from A a letter providing him a post dated check amounting to P1,100,000 including the 10% interests. B demanded because he believed that moral compulsion will NOT compel B to pay him. On the contrary, a legal obligation will compel him because normally people do not want to be imprisoned. This is the compelling power of the law which is absent in moral ethics!

Civil and Natural Obligation



Video Capture Picture from GMA 7 Startalk



Viral Facebook post

Under our Philippine Laws, there is a legal obligation on the part of the parents to support their children. Civil obligations give a right of action to compel their performance example of which is when a father fails to fulfill his obligation to support his child.

However, the parents cannot compel their children to support them.

Although, it is natural for the children to support their old parents, there is no law that may be used by parents to compel their children to support them.

However, there is a pending Bill in Congress which makes it an obligation for the children to support their parents. If this bill becomes a law, children shall be obliged to support their parents. Are you in favor of this bill?

In the field of IT, in the year 2000, the venomous "LOVE BUG" was maliciously designed despite the fact that its author was aware that doing such action was unethical and improper. But why is it that no one dares to do a copycat of the "LOVE BUG" after the enactment of the e-commerce law?

Perhaps they are afraid of the consequences of their act.

Since this book intends to cover a large portion on the ethical and legal issues concerning Information and Communications Technology (ICT) professionals in Philippine settings, only a brief overview is provided on the most common ethical theories. The principal sources for these brief introduction to ethical theories are *Ethical Insights; A Brief Introduction*, by Douglas Birsch (2002) and *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, by James Rachels (2003). The reader may read any of these books to explore any of the theories in greater depth.

END OF PRESENTATION.
THANK YOU!