I. Introduction to Philosophy

What is philosophy?

* A principle or theoretical basis of a particular field of knowledge.
* Pythagoras coined the term: Philo (love) + Sophia (wisdom) = Love of wisdom
* Lifeblood of philosophy is the *question.* The questions that linger.

*Notes:* The more you become wise, the more you become aware of how much things you don’t know; the more you become aware of the extent of your ignorance.

Karl Jaspers

* Philosophy is a study wherein every question leads to more questions, and where the question is more important than the answer.

Socrates *(teacher of plato)*

The Oracle of Delphi once asked, who the wisest man alive is and the oracle answered: Socrates, as he is the only person who claims that he **“knows nothing”.**

Martin Heidegger

* Philosophy is the mother of sciences, but in today’s era, there are distinctions between the two. To know,
* Questions that pertain to the universals are tackled in the realm of philosophy. Particulars are in science.

Universal Questions

* addresses/concerns all of humanity.

Particular Questions

* Answer the question in a particular manner. For instance, make a set of descriptions /direction /provide a formula/enumeration.

Perennial Questions

* A question that does not have a specific answer.
* There are certain perennial questions that gave birth to a branch of philosophy

4 Branches of Philosophy:

Metaphysics

* “what is real?”, “what is the essence of things?”
* Meta- beyond/after
* Physics- the study of beings
* The ‘essence’ of things or the study of “being qua being”

One of the problems that we have is the essence of God:

-If God is a perfect being, he must have three characteristics for perfection to be there: omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent.

-God is not limited by space and time, God exists everywhere all at once.

-Perfect God can’t be a Good God

- We are taught that God gave us free will. We are judged by the choices we make. However, did we really make a choice?

-If there’s a perfect being then we’re not and can’t really be free. How can there be free will if God already knows what you will choose (since God also exists in the present)? It negates the fact that Perfect God is a Good God.

-It’s a problem because we are dealing with the essence of the nature of perfection

Epistemology

* “What is knowledge?” “Is knowledge possible?”
* There are rationalist and empiricist answers to the question

Rationalism:

Plato is the father of rationalism

Knowledge is innate, independent of sensory experience. It is foundational and it comes in the form of innate principles or ideas.

Plato’s two worlds.

* The world of matter is where we exist. The tangible reality. The replica of the world of forms.
* The world of forms is the perfect reality. The blueprint.
* What makes chair a chair? Even if there are different kinds of chairs in the world of matter, we’ll know for a fact that it is still a chair because in the world of forms, there exist a perfect chair.
* In the world of forms, the chair contains the idea of what makes a chair, a chair.
* The human soul comes from the world of forms. Before a child is born, its designated soul will go through the sea of forgetfulness before it will go to its physical body in the world of matter. And then the soul will forget everything about the world of forms. The child will grow and it will learn, but according to plato, the child is not actually gaining new. The child is merely remembering what it knows from the world of forms.

Empiricism

* The mother of scientific method.
* John Locke: Tabula Rasa
* All knowledge is derived from sense of experience. Sensory experience

When the child experience the world, it’s gaining knowledge.

-knowledge come in the form of sensory experience.

-The modern era came into being because of the advancement of science.

Problem:

-descartes presented a certain problem in the philosophy with the advent of empiricism and science.

-In the scientific method, we rely on empirical data or something to be real which is practical.

-Descartes: we can’t trust our senses. If our basis for something to be real is our sense, then that would be a problem. The scientific method is based on the presumption that our senses can be trusted.

Rene Descartes

Cogito Ergo Sum

* If you think about the concept ‘who am I’, the I, is a composition of the things that comprise your memory.
* If you don’t your senses, then you doubt your memory. If you doubt your memory, the concept of ‘you’ will be gone. Where does the self go?
* Even if I doubt everything, I place everything in a state of doubt, there is not one thing that can’t be doubted.
* The fact remains that there is someone who is doubting because it is doubting it is thinking.
* “doubting is the process of thinking”
* Because I am thinking, then I am myself.

Emmanuel Kant:

* No such thing as pure innate ideas or pure sensory experience.
* Priori: the framework of the mind (space and time). The beginning. The mind has a priori.
* Posteriori: the influx of your experience as registered by your senses.
* The influx of your experience does not make sense unless it is being interpreted by a priori.
* Noumenon/Noumena: the world ‘itself’. What the world really is.
* Knowledge is possible because knowledge is not about knowing what the ‘thing’ is. Knowledge is something that happens to you. Knowledge is an effect of a priori and a posteriori.

Logic

* “what is correct thinking?”
* The science and art of correct thinking.
* For example, music is art. But there’s science behind music (notes, chords) If there came a time where you do music and don’t think about these technicalities anymore, you’re doing art.
* As science: the principles and rules that lead you to identify fallacies and valid reasoning.
* As art: the application of reasoning in debates and analyzing text, articles, etc.
* “common sense”, a universal language
* Logos: word. Something that was there from the beginning. Everything was created through the logos. Everything’s gonna go back to the logos.
* The ancient Greeks believed in logos.

Philosophy: is the mother of all science because it is the only study that investigates into the question of “being” (metaphysics). Logic is the mouthpiece (language) of Metaphysics. And logic is the foundation of all sciences. When the logos begin to speak, the language of the logos is logic, when you investigate the nature of logos you’re doing metaphysics. Logic, once it begins to take form into the physical world it passes to the realm of mathematics. And when it takes form, It begins to take space mass gain forms = physics. And when we study physics we go back to the fundamental composition of reality= chemistry. Chemistry to biology.

Ethics

* Ethikos: arising from habit.
* Moral Philosophy
* “How must a life be lived?”
* Questions of Morality: what is right and wrong in a particular situation and/or what is good or bad.
* Habits creates tradition. Tradition creates customs. Customs creates culture. Culture creates morality.

II. Introduction to Ethics

Natural Law (St. Thomas Aquinas)

* There are acts which in themselves are inherently evil/good by virtue of the nature of the act itself, independent of the circumstances and the motivation/purpose for doing the act.
* e.g. killing by nature is an act of evil.

Utilitarianism (Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mills)

* GHGN (The Greatest Happiness for the Greatest Number of People)
* If we as a society label killing as evil, then each individual will feel safe. No one wants a society where killing is okay and legal.
* If you feel safer, it brings happiness to the greatest number of people.
* Civilizations are built on the concept of helping one another.

Since I am given the chance to express something, in this essay I will choose what I want to choose.

Weakness:

* A society is composed of individuals; the foundation of a society is the individuals
* The goal of society is to protect the rights of individuals. However, if we choose be between the society and individuals, we will always choose the society. The society is necessary for the survival of the individual even if it means sacrificing the individual. The concept of sacrificing one or the few for the good of the many, at times is justifiable. It’s sad, yes, but justifiable.
* A sad take on reality.
* When you ask the question what’s the right thing to do, at first glance, it seems like a very easy question.

Ethikos

* How should a life be lived?
* Arising from “habit”
* Every act has the tendency of becoming a habit.
* The ancient greeks believed that the study of morality, has to do with looking at habits. Because habits are by-products of the acts that we do.
* Your virtue and vices becomes your character.
* Your character determine your destiny or the quality of life you are living.
* In every act that we do, how do we know if an act is right or wrong?

Filipino Context:

Gawi and Gawa

The study of ethics focuses on the concept of “gawa” (acts) in order to understand the “kagawian” (habits)

Plato and “The Good”

Plato founded the Academy of Athens. He believes in the notion that there is a **truth** and such a thing called **the ultimate good**. However, this has been challenged by different views.

Glaucon: The ring of Gyges

If a person is given the power to be invisible, how would the person turn out? If you gain possession of such ring, what would you do?

Glaucon is the brother of plato and he doesn’t believe in the ultimate good of plato.

* For glaucon, when you have the capability to become invisible that’s when your true nature or your real desire and motivations come out. The only thing that is keeping us from doing the things we want to do, is the concept of fear. Fear of being judged. Fear of the ridicule of society. So only with the concept of being invisible does it come out.
* Naturally, human beings desire things, like to pursue certain things as part of their nature, but it’s just society that creates labels that hinder us from doing such thing. Society creates laws that prevent us from doing what we want. We are always in conflict with society.
* There is no such thing as the good. Because the concept of the good is just a notion created by society—human beings themselves.

Plato’s response to Glaucon and his Gyges Ring:

The Allegory of the Cave

* A hypothetical story.
* There is a thing called the good. It’s just that you were not able to see it. And once you walked the path towards the truth it is not an easy path. After a very painful process, it will come to the point where you will see the truth. And once you do that, there’s no turning back. And if ever you will share this with others do not expect this to be welcome with open arms.
* The path towards the truth is a lonely and painful one.
* Due to Socrates’ discoveries and his teachings, he was condemned to death. He was considered the poisoner of the minds of the youth of Athens.
* People who are able to have critical thinking, usually ends up being the antagonist of the society.

Protagoras (Relativism)

“Man is the measure of all things”

It has anthropocentric (human-centered) implications.

* e.g. if I tell you the mountains look beautiful, are the mountains really beautiful as is or they just become beautiful because we see them as beautiful. Beauty lies in the eye of the beholder.
* e.g. we label gold as something valuable because we deemed it to be valuable. It is human beings that create value.

On morality:

It is us human beings that decide what is good and bad. The concept of morality belongs to a certain group of people deciding for themselves what is group and bad, in a certain time and age. Morality can change; it can differ from cultures and different perspectives.

On the concept of identity:

Whatever I feel about myself: my gender, my identity, becomes real. What I think about myself, what I feel is real.

Aristotle – Virtue Ethics

Character

The identity of a person is comprised of the characteristics the person has: what you do, how you act the things that you do create your character and your character becomes your definition of what you are as a person.

Aristotle’s ethics is focused more not on the issue of **what** is right and wrong but on **defining** the concept of right and wrong based on perfection or the pursuit of the perfection of the character (or, is defined by the lifelong pursuit of perfection of character).

**Aristotle**

* Was born in the Greek Colony of Stagira in Macedonia.
* Considered as Plato’s greatest student.
* Was the teacher of Alexander the Great
* His ethics (virtue ethics) is mainly discussed in his “Nicomachean Ethics” dedicated to his son Nicomachus.

Points to Remember:

**Ethics** deals with different theories, or schools of thought that attempt to address the issue of right and wrong/ good and bad. Ultimately answers the question “How should a life be lived.”

Aristotle’s Parts of the soul:

The human being is very special because it has a soul and the human soul has three components:

Vegetative:

*Vegetation.* Present in the plants and other lower forms of life. Responsible for nourishment.

Appetitive:

*Appetite.* Present in animals as well. Responsible for our drives, instincts, and desires.

Rational:

*Reason.* Our capability to comprehend and meditate on the ‘logos’. Our rationality. What separates us from other beings.

The Capacity for Rational Thinking

Human beings are animals, but more than that we are rational animals. We go beyond our physical being. We are not just bound by our instincts, desires, and needs. We are able to see ourselves and our physicality so we are able to transcend and look for ourselves, which plants and animals are not able to do. Within the human being’s reason, there exits the phronesis and the Sophia.

Phronesis:

Practical wisdom. The capacity to make practical and rational decisions. The kind of wisdom that we use in order to survive and to succeed in life. We learn from our mistakes, and from these mistakes (or experiences), we’re able to come up with a deductive type of reasoning that leads us to make conclusive and rational decisions.

Sophia:

Transcendental wisdom. The capacity for higher contemplation. The kind of wisdom that can understand and comprehend the logos. The Sophia would merely translate to the phronesis in order for the human beings to translate the knowledge from the logos into practical action.

Vice and Virtue:

Every act, when repeatedly done, can have the tendency of becoming either a vice or a virtue. Your vice/virtue determines the answer to the question ‘how life must be lived’. In everything that we do, we are not doing it just because it’s part of our nature, we rationalize it. Human acts are done in the presence of reason.

Vice:

*The excess* or deficiency in virtue.

Rashness-Cowardice

Prodigality-Stinginess

Bashfulness-Shamelessness

Virtue:

*The mean*, or middle ground,

Courage

Frugality

Modesty

Mesotes: The middle ground.

Can be likened to an archer who starts mastering the art of always hitting the target even if it moves in different directions. Because there is no exact middle ground for an act, what determines the mean is the particular situation. The concept of virtue has no exact formula. It has to do with knowing the right manner of action in every situation. That’s why Aristotle introduce Sophia and Phronesis to know how to know the right manner of action.

(Analogy) The virtuous knife; The Katana

Eudaimonia: Happiness

Living the life in accordance with virtue. “Human flourishing”, what does it mean to flourish? When you are living your life in line with the purpose and living it with the dedication towards perfection of one’s character.

The Natural Law Ethics – St. Thomas Aquinas

St. Thomas Aquinas is an Italian Catholic priest belonging to the Order of Preachers or “Dominicans”. Born in 1225, died on March 17, 1274. Writings: Summa Contra Gentiles, Summa Theologica, De Veritato.

The Aristotelian Influence: Defining Morality

The three parts of soul: vegetative, appetitive, rational. Understanding these three components is also one of the foundations in understanding the natural law theory.

Because of these three, the human person has the capability of understanding the “Divine Will” through the “Sofia”. Is imbued with freewill and can also deviate from the Divine Law. The sharing of human reason in the eternal will or the divine law is the “natural law.” The link between god and human beings are the prophets. God speaks to the prophets and the latter relay it to people. This divine will when it is spoken by god, it comes in the form of a ‘law’. The law then becomes a part of a guidance in order for them to live in accordance with the divine will. In order to make it possible to always make sure that they are conscious to the law they also create human laws that are supposed to be in accordance with the divine law. Their lives are being governed by such law. This is how the concept of morality started. Everything plants and animals do is part of the natural law, not within moral evaluation. Everything you see in nature is part of nature. (animals killing animals is not ‘murder’). Morality comes in when this rational aspect of the human being is concerned. Rationality governs our appetitive and vegetative.

Defining Morality

Human acts:

* Has knowledge, freedom, and voluntariness
* A lessened degree in either of the three lessens the agent’s accountability.
* The subject of ethics. Capable of moral evaluation.

Acts of Man:

* The absence of three but is performed by a person.
* No accountability
* Not the subject of ethics- indifferent or amoral acts (neither moral/immoral)
* These acts are committed when you are unaware. (e.g. sleeping, psychologically not well/mad, infants, senile individuals)

Conscience

One cannot do the right thing if it cannot know what it is.

* To inform you before doing something.
* It reminds you after doing something.

Conscience is part of our practical wisdom. Therefore, it must be taught in order for it to function as such. In order to retain the knowledge, the conscience must be able to have it practice to its daily existence. Knowing what’s right and wrong is a constant practice. a concept is only a concept, it must be practiced and used. If it is practiced well, a conscience will be a conscience.

Types of conscience that can lead to wrongdoing:

* Calloused- long-term persistence in doing evil. Naanad nag buhat og dili maayo masking kabalo na siya nga mali.
* Scrupulous – overly concerned to avoiding doing what is wrong and in the process, you will only see the wrong. Lose the confidence to do good. Not taking the risk to at least do right.
* Perplexed- confused. Lacks guidance.
* Ignorant- lacks education.

The Life of Contemplation

The practical wisdom (phronesis) is where one’s conscience is located. Therefore, the conscience is practical wisdom. It is blind and needs to be educated. It is the Sophia that is able to connect with the divine will, it informs the divine will, then it informs the phronesis and in turn, puts it into constant practice. Thus, we see the influence of Aristotelian virtue ethics of constant aim towards refinement of one’s character with the aide of reason.

There is only true free will/freedom when one becomes one with the divine will.

Not all human beings have the same capability when it comes to the functioning of the Sophia. Therefore, the scriptures are necessary for guidance. Some people are meant to be guided and follow more than others.

It is the duty of the wise to guide others towards the truth. And in doing such, one has to take note of moral accountability.