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Chapter 4: Trying Out One's New Sword

Amazon Reference: <http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534584306/>

Quote:

"There is only one world and we all have to live in it."

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn about moral isolationism and if it really is applicable to our society.

Review:

This chapter focuses on the concept of moral isolationism and on how this became unreal in our society. Here, Mary Midgley pointed out some important factors and imposes some questions that would eventually lead us into conclusion that this moral isolationism is unreal. It is to say that we can be able to understand other cultures aside from our own and be able to make a moral judgment based on our understanding. It is far from the concept of moral isolationism that we should not judge other culture because we are not in the position to do so. But as we review the questions posed by Midgley, we may say that it is not impossible to understand other cultures.

First thing to be asked is that "does isolating barrier work both ways?" This might be a little confusing but the truth here is that even we don't criticize other cultures, we are aware that they can criticize us. That is why this barrier is only on a one way basis. They can judge us based on their experience with us (if there is any). Thus, they learn from their experience. Next, is to ask is "does the isolating barrier between cultures block praise as well as blame?" For me, it is obvious that this question is adds to the weight of making moral isolationism irrelevant. We all know that we do praise or blame other people even we don't have enough knowledge as to why we need to do that. Same goes to the culture. We can praise or condemn their culture even we are on the outside of it as long as we do criticize it. Therefore, we can't judge without supporting knowledge about it. Third is to ask "what is involved in judging" This questions leads us to the term *information gathering*. We can't say something to others without knowledge of what to say. Doing so leads us to nowhere. This takes us to our last question that "if we can't judge other cultures, can we really judge our own?" This is really a great question which, for me, gives the right basis to make moral isolationism irrelevant. We can say that it is like this or like that but in the end, we know nothing about our own. It is for the reason that judgment encompasses external factors which helps us make a decision. Thus, we can't judge our own culture if there is no outsider that would give his/her opinion to it.

With all of these questions to be answer, one thing is for sure. It is that we are only in the same world with the same position to criticize and be criticized by other forces that surround us. This helps us to know more of our own and have knowledge of others too. Thus, we are all mixed even though we have diversity in our culture.

What I have learned:

- Moral isolationism prevents us from knowing our own culture.
- Moral isolationism is irrelevant in our context of society.
- Respect is earned not demanded.
- Judgment is not only to the outside forces but also to us.

Integrative Questions:

- What is Moral Isolationism?
- Where does praise or blame come from?
- What term is associated when judging?
- What is it that judgment composed of that makes us aware of others?
- What makes Moral Isolationism unreal?

Chapter 5: Utilitarianism

Amazon Reference: <http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534584306/>

Quote:

"Happiness is desirable."

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn about the principle of Utilitarianism.

Review:

In this chapter, John Stuart Mill focuses on the concept of Utilitarianism or the principle of greatest happiness. This concept states that happiness comes from all that is good. The so-called good in this principle is defined to be what is desirable. In other words, what is pleasurable to us is good. In this principle, Mill introduced some concepts for us to clearly understand the principle of utilitarianism.

First among of these is the concept of measurement among different pleasures. He said that it can be through its quality or quantity. Quantity is merely obvious, for it focuses on the amount of pleasure we have. Quality on the other hand does not refer to the standard but rather to the desire to have it or the preference of the person that wants to acquire that certain pleasure for himself.

The next is the concept of intellectual and bodily pleasure. This is where there is a misunderstanding to which is greater among the two. Of course bodily pleasure gives comfort to our senses that experience it while intellectual is on our mind. The answer to which is greater, it depends upon the mindset of the person. There may be some that chooses bodily over intellectual pleasure and vice versa.

The third is the concept of the ends and means. This concept may not be explicitly present at the reading but it is more stress in the part of some pleasures which are not by default but rather created by us. Examples of which are our desire for money, power and fame. These may not be the real ends of the said principle but

can also be one through the choice of the people that wants to acquire them and feels pain in not having able to do so.

The last is the concept of the real end. It is the one that makes me think that Utilitarianism is not bad at all. This concept tells us that the greater end of this principle is not our own happiness but happiness of all. Thus it allows to even making virtue a pleasure even not creating pleasure for our self but at least contributing to the greater end of the principle.

All of these concepts only tell us that greater understanding is required in order to make judgment on such principle. Thus, considering the principle of utility, we can still be able to know what is right or wrong and act morally by just realizing the greater end of it.

What I have learned:

- Four concepts surrounding the principle of utility
- Happiness of all is the real end of Utilitarianism
- Humans can create desirable pleasures for themselves

Integrative Questions:

- What is the main idea of Utilitarianism?
- How many concepts are introduced to understand Utilitarianism?
- What is the real end of Utilitarianism?
- Where does the measurement of pleasure depend?
- What is needed in order to act morally through the Principle of Utility?

Chapter 6: The Debate against Utilitarianism

Amazon Reference: <http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534584306/>

Quote:

"They are individuals who, by their choices, show themselves to deserve different kinds of responses."

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn about some arguments over Utilitarianism and how they defend over it.

Review:

This chapter focuses on some of the arguments that are being posed on the principle of utility or Utilitarianism and the defense of the Utilitarianism on these arguments. Upon reading the whole topic, we can come to a conclusion whether these arguments are implying that the principle itself is wrong or it should only just be modified.

This principle come against some arguments and the reading gives us 3 of them. These are Justice, Rights and Backward-Looking Reason. First is justice,

Utilitarianism tends to measure the happiness that it would bring to a person. Thus, it is possible that they defer it in accordance to the happiness that they could gain. Next, is the right which can also be violated that these rights are trampled for the sake of pleasure that those people who have done it. Even though that those deeds didn't affect the supposedly victim. There is still a wrong treatment on that person. In the case that there is unhappiness brought to the victim, it is not a reason to weigh the happiness gain by the person and the unhappiness on the side of the victim. It is for the reason that their happiness matters because their theory already states that the happiness refers to the welfare of the common. Thus, they violated their own principle. The last is the Backward-Looking Reason in which the mistake here of the said principle is that they forget to give importance on past commitment which can also brought consequences to them. It is a matter of weighing those things if there is a need to choose among them.

All these arguments are also defended by the philosophers of Utilitarianism. Their first defense is that those examples used are unrealistic. Thus, it makes those examples irrelevant in being arguments to the principle itself. Next defense is the reformation of the theory in which they consider the rules that are created and not the rule created from the principle itself which is called rule-utilitarianism. Their last defense is that they proposed that feelings should be discarded rather than the theory. In this way, the theory can be defensible by rethinking those matters that we had ignored.

On these arguments and defenses, one thing is for sure, there is a positive and negative side of this principle. It is wrong to rely on common sense for it can mislead us because it is only our subscription to the common knowledge in our society. The good part on the other hand is that this theory only based on rationality which could help us be responsible in our acts.

What I have learned:

- The three arguments against Utilitarianism
- The defense line on the Utilitarian Philosophers
- The positive and negative characteristics of Utilitarianism

Integrative Questions:

- Why Justice became an argument against Utilitarianism?
- Why Rights became an argument against Utilitarianism?
- Why Backward-Looking Reasons became an argument against Utilitarianism?
- What are some defenses given against those arguments?
- What is the advantage and disadvantage of Utilitarianism?