

Egoism and Moral Scepticism by James Rachels

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn what the principles of Egoism are, “what is it?” and “what does it do?” are just some of the questions I expect to answer after I read the essay. Also, I expect to deepen my understanding on Moral Scepticism and be able answer my question, “why it is mentioned in the title of the essay?”

Quote:

Ed: “Now Abe, where does selfishness come in this little episode?” Abe Lincoln: “Why, bless your soul, Ed, that was the very essence of selfishness. I should have had no peace of mind all day had I gone on and left that suffering old sow worrying over those pugs. I did it to get peace of mind, don’t you see?”

Book review:

These essay talks about Egoism (particularly that of ethical and psychological), the views of different egoist (such as Glaucon) regarding how a specific person thinks and acts. The author James Rachels contradicts the doctrines of psychological and ethical egoism with her beliefs on moral scepticism and Altruism. Psychological egoism is the view that all human in nature are selfish and that all actions made by men are motivated by self-interest. In line with psychological egoism, ethical egoism is the view of how a person or human should act. In an egoist point of view, humans have no obligation for the wellbeing of others except for their own self-interest. James Rachels opposed these principles by stating two arguments, the first being that people never does things voluntarily except for what they want to do. This supports the egoistic point of view that people actions are motivated by self interest alone. James Rachels stated that there are two classes of actions made by us humans. One are the actions we might not want to do, but still we are forced to do because we want to achieve something in the end; a good example of this is doing assignments, for (some) students assignments are very exhausting but because of the desire to earn good grades, students are forced to exert effort in

doing their assignments, this clearly supports the egoistic point of view on selfishness. The second class are the actions we humans do, not because we want to do it, nor even because there is an end result that will be an advantage, but rather we do because we feel there is an obligation why we need to do them. The example mentioned above supports this action. The student who is forced to do an action (do assignments) he didn't want to do in the first place. The fact that the student did his assignments even if doesn't want to, is not an act of selfishness. People's actions are not always of self interest, there are actions that prioritize the welfare of others and it is only human to help others because as the saying goes, "no man is an island" people need each in order to survive.

What I have learned:

I have learned that Egoism is a false point of view. I cannot fully appreciate its concept of self interest because personally some of my actions as person, a son, a classmate and boyfriend clearly oppose it.

Integrative Questions:

- 1) Is it in human nature to help others?
 - 2) Can a person survive alone?
 - 3) Is self interest a good or bad thing?
 - 4) Are all actions of men motivated by self interest alone?
 - 5) Is Altruism a good or bad thing?
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Religion, Morality and Conscience by John Arthur

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn the connection between Religion, Morality and Conscience, if there is any. I expect to gain a deeper understanding of what these three words are and also its importance.

Quote:

"Morality provides the standards we rely on in gauging our interactions with family, lovers, friends, fellow citizens, and even strangers."

Book review:

In this essay religion is viewed as a belief that is responsible with the teaching of morality. On the other hand, morality was described in the essay as the code to righteousness, a community without social moral code would not be a community at all. Conscience as we all know is in line with morality, it is the sense of what is right and what is wrong. Conscience is based on people judgement; an action with a good end result is of moral action and for an immoral action it is vice versa. So, putting all the definitions aside, John Arthur, the author of the essay raised the question "does morality depend on religion?" Well, personally I do believe that 1) morality doesn't depend on religion and that 2) some religions depend on morality. Morality for me is purely social, like what the author stressed out goodness within is in the nature of a person. A person that belongs in a community with social moral code will be of good moral conduct. Morality is something that can be learned free without the use of writings or hearing mass because through social interaction with the right people improve a person's morality. In morality, there is no divine command telling you what is right and what is wrong, morality completely relies on a person's judgement on what right and what is wrong based on the outcome of their actions. The author is not stating that religion is not bad thing, in fact in some religions, their ministers' help by sharing beliefs and sharing teachings to further develop morality within their members. But we cannot exclude the fact that some religions are formed

with self interest of others, for some religion morality is not that important because for their ministers, their self interest is what is important. For some people religion is very important because it is in religion that they find euphoria and feelings belongingness. The bottom line is, morality is purely social; it is in the nature of people to be good because as the saying goes, all people have goodness within.

What I have learned:

Morality is social, moral conduct is something that can be developed through social interaction with the right persons. Religion is belief that teaches morality that helps to develop a person's character.

Integrative questions:

- 1) Does morality depend on religion in some way?
 - 2) Does religion depend on morality in some way?
 - 3) How is morality social?
 - 4) What is the purpose of morality?
 - 5) How will life be without morality?
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Master and Slave Morality by Friedrich Nietzsche

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn the concepts behind master and slave morality. What kind of morality is enveloped in it?

Quote:

"Exploitation does not belong to a depraved, or imperfect and primitive society: it belongs to the nature of the living beings as a primary organic function; it is a consequence of the intrinsic Will of Power, which is precisely to the Will of Life."

Book review:

There are two types of morality which is Master and Slave Morality. *Master* states that this is the morality of a person who is distinguished as "creator of values". While on the other hand, *slave* is a morality of a person who surrenders himself to the master, it is the very opposite of master-morality where the master is the dominant force over the slave. I personally believe Nietzsche being a German and all is an avid follower of what is now what we call a dictatorial government where the ones who has power reigns over supreme over those in the lower class. Survival of the fittest is the word that best describes slave and master morality, where the strong are the ones who will survive and the weak are the ones who will perish. He believes in the concept of supreme race, a belief that was popularized by the German Dictator Adolf Hitler in the Second World War. Adolf Hitler believed that their race which are descendants of the Aryan race are the ones who are supreme and all other race are inferior. This belief resulted in mass killings specifically massacre of Jews. The world we live in today is very different from the world a hundred or even thousands of years ago where racial supremacy is raging. Racial supremacy upholds chaos which is not a good thing. We as humans must respect every individual regardless of race or social strata.

What I have learned:

Master and slave morality is doesn't promote equality. Equal opportunity and respect for humankind is a must.

Integrative Questions:

- 1) What is the concept behind master and slave morality?
 - 2) Does master and slave morality promote the concept of self-interest?
 - 3) Who will survive in a world where master and slave morality is governing?
 - 4) Does it promote equality among humanity?
 - 5) What is this good for?
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Trying out one's new sword by Mary Midgley

What I expect to learn:

What is the story behind this essay, why is entitled "trying out one's new sword". Also I expect to learn intriguing concepts of morality that is contained in this essay.

Quote:

"Morally and physically, there is only one world, and we all have to live in it."

Book review:

Mary Midgley a teacher of philosophy widely criticized the concept of moral isolationism, a type of morality where in a culture that is unknown to a person can never be criticized regardless whether their practices are immoral or not. This concept of morality is very egotistical because of the fact that it forbids the right of others to give an honest judgement. Mary Midgley clearly pointed out this unfair idea to the practice of ancient Japanese culture called, *tsujigiri* or *crossed-cut* in English translation. This ancient practice involves a samurai trying out his sword to an unexpected wayfarer. The intention of this ancient practice is to test if a sword is indeed razor sharp enough to slice through someone with a single blow. Failure to do the test properly will result in dishonour on the part of the samurai, offending of ancestors and even failure to the emperor. In the concept of moral isolationism, a person can never judge or criticize another culture that he/she fully doesn't understand. Considering the brutal outcome of the ancient Japanese practice of *Tsujigiri*, I think it is just too proper to say that the concept of moral isolationism is hands down immoral and unacceptable to many. Slicing an innocent person into two just because he/she isn't part of a culture is not a very humanely action. All of people regardless of what culture they belong to live altogether under one skies, and that is our very own earth's skies. Respect to humankind is just one way to promote cultural harmony, moral actions lead to good whereas immoral actions lead to chaos.

What I have learned:

Moral isolationism is somewhat very egocentric because of the thought that a person that doesn't understand a culture can ever criticize it regardless if that specific culture has practices that are immoral.

Integrative questions:

- 1) How are cultures formed?
 - 2) Are all cultures unique?
 - 3) Is it possible that a new culture can be formed from an existing culture?
 - 4) How important is respect for culture?
 - 5) Can one have the right to criticize a culture?
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Utilitarianism by John Stuart Mill

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn the principles of Utilitarianism from John Stuart Mill's perspective.

Quote:

"No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness."

Book review:

To live happily is every person's dream, but how does one become happy? For John Stuart Mill, morality depends on how much happiness we can bring out by doing something. Acting selfishly doesn't give true happiness because believe it or not, all people need someone to share their life with. Happiness must always come in bundles meaning happiness is not just bound for a single person, but rather happiness must benefit all people in the world. God didn't create happiness but for one person, he envisioned a world where his creations live in peace and harmony, people sharing blessings to the needy so that everybody would be more or less happy. Acting unselfishly is the right thing to do because it is moral a moral act. Learning to help others can open a person's mind to so many things, things that he/she can only feel and appreciate, that is the feeling of happiness by helping other people. John Stuart Mill said that "There is nothing originally more desirable about money than about any heap of glittering pebbles. Its worth is solely that of the things which it will buy. The desire for other things than itself, which it is a means of gratifying". If you think intensely you would realize that in reality what John Stuart Mill said about money is true, I mean, what does now do to survive? A person when born is under the care of a parent. A lucky child who gets a chance to have a diploma both on high school and college will eventually look for a job and work. So what is his/her work for? To earn money, that is the aim of every person in the world. Money buys happiness, clothes, food, shelter, car, jewelry and etc. Heck! They even say that money can even buy you love. Asking a person likes Bill Gates who has made his way to the top and earning so much

money that he himself cannot spend even if he dies. After he made his 40B, what did he feel? He felt a certain lacking. Bill Gates didn't feel the happiness that he expected money could give. In the end, Bill Gates found true happiness through charity, together with his wife, Melinda, by sharing their wealth over all over the world that was the time Bill found the happiness he truly desires. People will realize in the end, self interest will not give you true happiness.

What I have learned:

I have learned that it is through respect for one another where peace and harmony is obtained. Also I have learned that equality is a very important aspect in life, it must prevail in our world so as to avoid conflicts that could lead to chaos. All happiness in the world lies in the hands of the people.

Integrative questions:

- 1) What is the difference of a Utilitarianism and Hedonism Morality?
 - 2) What is true happiness?
 - 3) When does a person become truly happy?
 - 4) Is pain an absence of happiness?
 - 5) How can the world be happy?
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The debate over Utilitarianism by James Rachels

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn more about the principle of Utilitarianism. Also I want to know what the subject of the debate over Utilitarianism.

Quote:

“Man does not strive after happiness, only the Englishman does that.”

Book review:

The theory defended by Bentham and Mill was summarized into three propositions. The first being, action based on what we know is right and wrong. Nothing else matters. Right actions are, simply, those that have the best consequences. The second is, the only thing that matters is the amount of happiness or unhappiness that is caused. The third proposition was, in calculating the happiness and unhappiness that we feel after our action. Justice, rights, and promises are being done because they don't want to have scandals and riots. I'm having a difficult time accepting the theory of Utilitarianism full, happiness is indeed desirable but how can happiness be the thing that only matters.

What I have learned:

I have learned that Utilitarianism is not all good because it bypasses moral judgement.

Integrative questions:

- 1) What is the subject of the debate?
 - 2) How can happiness be achieved?
 - 3) Is happiness easily achievable?
 - 4) What is act utilitarianism?
 - 5) What is rule utilitarianism?
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The Categorical Imperative by Emmanuel Kant

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn the principles of categorical imperative and also its effects on humanity.

Quote:

"It is impossible to conceive anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be taken as good without qualification, except a good will"

Book Review:

In this book Emmanuel Kant talks about the categorical imperative and good will. So what is categorical imperative? It helps us to know which actions are obligatory and which are forbidden, in other words categorical imperative is what ought to be done. Categorical imperative is bounded by rules of humanity and using instinct as a determinant of what actions are acceptable and what is not. Kant also tackled a different kind of imperative which is "Hypothetical imperative". This imperative is conditional meaning an action is driven by a desired result. An instance of hypothetical imperative is a teenager helping his mom out in the family business because he wants something in return, like a new pair of shoes. This imperative is not good because of the presence of self interest which sometimes makes the means to achieve the desired end result appalling. Good will as we all know is a disposition of kindness and compassion towards other people (strangers or non-strangers). A simple yet very meaningful example of an act of good will is *"giving food to the hungry"*. Good will is a nature of a person that leads him/her in doing what is the right course of action in given situation that needs moral judgment. Being a person of good will doesn't have qualifications because anyone (rich or poor) who is conscious of his/her surroundings can be a person of such value.

What I have learned:

By being consciousness of his/her surroundings, a person can develop good will.

Integrative questions:

- 1) What is categorical imperative?
 - 2) What is a hypothetical imperative?
 - 3) What is the difference between the two?
 - 4) Do all people have good will?
 - 5) How can good will be developed?
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Happiness and virtue by Aristotle

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn the Aristotle's principles about of happiness and virtue.

Quote:

"Human beings seek happiness, and that happiness is not pleasure, honour, or wealth, but an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue."

Book review:

In this book Aristotle's discusses his principle behind the subject of happiness and virtue. He believed that virtues eventually lead to happiness, there are many views when it comes to achieving happiness but the happiness Aristotle's speaks off is not the happiness we tend to think of today. In today's modern era, for teenagers like me happiness translates to becoming rich, spending some doe in parties, having cool cars, big house, cool stuff, etc. If you sum it up, all those basically is like living the loaded life. The Greeks during the early times had a different of happiness; Aristotle spoke about achieving eudemonia (which is roughly translated into happiness). Eudemonia is not an emotional state of being happy or jumpy or whatsoever. Eudemonia is more about being all that you can, the best you can be, maximizing your full potential in living life. The idea behind eudemonia is being the best you can be while maximizing your full potential, you as a person will bloom and will be able to see life as more of a delight rather one which is full of obstacles. Aristotle spoke that the practice of virtues would lead to happiness, in the sense of being the best you can be (maximizing your full potential). By virtues, Aristotle meant the act of achieving balance and moderation. For Aristotle the act of living in balance and moderation would bring the highest pleasure. A prosperous person who lives a simple life because he wants to secure his family life is a good example of balance and moderation. It was in Aristotle's belief that by these virtues, happiness would be attained. By contemplating a person refines and is able to discover virtues, these virtues are then carried out continuously and eventually allow a person to reach his/her full potential.

What I have learned:

I have learned that virtues eventually lead to happiness. Eudemonia is the true state of happiness, being the best you can be while maximizing your full potential, a person will bloom and will be able to see life as a delight.

Integrative questions:

- 1) What is true happiness?
 - 2) What is eudemonia?
 - 3) How is eudemonia achieved?
 - 4) What is balance and moderation?
 - 5) How are virtue and happiness related?
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The nature and value of rights by Joel Feinberg

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn the real value of nature and rights of humanity.

Quote:

“Try to imagine Nowheresville—a world very much like our own except that no one or hardly anyone has rights.”

Book review:

The author Joel Feinberg discussed in this article the nature and value of rights. To be able to discuss the value of rights the author used metaphor by citing a place called Nowheresville. Feinberg claimed that Nowheresville is a place very much like the world we live in except that the people who live in it doesn't have the rights that we so profusely enjoy. The author uses this metaphor to let the readers appreciate nature and the value of each and everyone's right. As we all know in the law, all individual has the right to live freely given the fact that he does not have any obligation with the law. Living in a world like Nowheresville can be pretty chaotic because nobody has rights, a person cannot claim anything to be personal property because there is no law that can honour that claim. A place with now abiding law is a place with no discipline, self obedience and most especially equality. Feinberg also discussed the principle of duty in the article. Duty as stated in the book is an obligation that is needed to be fulfilled. In the world that we live in today, duty and rights are special ingredients in achieving social equality. In order for human rights to be honored, all members of a society have a duty to comply with the law which states that everyone whether rich or poor has the right to live a healthy normal life, free of abuse and prejudice. Failure to comply with the standards set by the law will result in just compelling consequences ordered by the law.

What I learned:

I have learned to respect the nature and rights of all people.

Integrative Question:

- 1) Who are the people equitable to have rights?
 - 2) How important are rights?
 - 3) What is the role of rights in the world we live in today?
 - 4) Who formulates the people's rights?
 - 5) Who implements rights?
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Taking Rights seriously by Ronald Dworkin

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn how to take rights seriously. Also I expect to learn the principles behind the article written by the author.

Quote:

"If the government itself is not taking right seriously, then they do not take the law seriously either"

Book review:

In this book the author discussed the importance of rights and why we should as persons take rights seriously. Ronald Dworkin in the article asserts that individuals have legal rights beyond those openly laid down by the government and also that they have political and moral rights against the state that are prior to the welfare of the majority. Also he argues that basic among political rights is the right of each individual to the equal respect and concern of those who govern him. As we can understand in the article written by Ronald Dworkin, rights may it be political or moral are the elements that protect ourselves from outmost harm. Abuse and unfair treatment is one of the most common problems our country is facing today. It is through bribery that justice cannot be properly served, letting the wealthy convicted free from any sentence and thus leaving the underprivileged victim in a state of helplessness. The government is the entity that should administer the people's rights. It is through the power of the government that laws are enforced. These laws are made to protect the welfare of the people by supporting their rights. Equality among the members of the state is the most important aspect that can help in administering the rights of the people properly, without unjust treatment.

What I have learned:

Rights are an important element in living life and should be respected by each and every human being.

Integrative questions:

- 1) How important are rights?
 - 2) What are the rights of a person?
 - 3) Who protects the rights of a person?
 - 4) How can a person fight for his right?
 - 5) What are the consequences if you don't respect rights?
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A Theory of Justice by John Rawls

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn what the principles behind the theory of justice are.

Quote:

"In justice as fairness the original position of equality corresponds to the state of nature in the traditional theory of the social contract. This original position is not, of course, thought of as an actual historical state of affairs, much less as a primitive condition of culture. It is understood as a purely hypothetical situation characterized so as to lead to a certain conception of justice."

Book review:

The author in this article points out and discusses two principles in justice which is liberty and wealth. The first principle which is liberty states that each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all. This means that every person regardless of his/her social status is entitled to equal rights, any abuse to his/her right is subject to judicial action. The second principle of justice which is wealth states that social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. The second principle for me supports what is being stated in the first principle of Liberty. Any living person is entitled to live freely without any treat or abuse. The social and economic status in reality tells a lot about a person because of the influence and power money can give, but this should not in any way influence improper implementation of justice. Equality amongst the people should always be upheld by the governing state because it is through equality that peace and harmony is achieved.

What I have learned:

I have learned that equality brings peace to a nation.

Integrative questions:

- 1) What is the principle behind the theory of justice?
 - 2) How does wealth influence a person's standing in society?
 - 3) How does wealth affect the implementation of justice?
 - 4) What is equal basic liberty?
 - 5) How can it be exercised?
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The need for more than justice by Annete Baier

What I expect to learn:

I expect to learn the principles behind the article written by the author.

Quote:

“Let me say quite clearly at this early point that there is little disagreement that justice is a social value of very great importance, and injustice an evil.”

Book review:

In this article, the author, Annete Baier, points out the importance justice towards attaining peace and harmony in society. So how important is justice really? How can the power of justice bring peace and harmony in society? Is justice fairness? To answer all these questions, let me first discuss what justice is and its principles. The definition given by *socyberty.com* of justice is as follows “Justice, in a functional form, is the idea that, within the same value scope (e.g. moral, ethical, etc) of the infringement, those who commit a wrong in a value system are entitled to receive a similar or related amount of action within the same system/means, and that receipt is except from being considered wrong. Based on the definition given, it is safe to assume that justice is indeed fairness. It is in the concept of justice that a person convicted of a crime may receive a similar or related amount of action which is predetermined by the law. We can understand justice as being a form of societal defense mechanism, allowing a society to purge itself of elements it does not accept without running into problems of the legitimacy of the purge. Justice brings forth an authoritative element to society that sets standards for the people to follow. These standards set by the law are what help in bringing forth equality and fairness into the table because any defiance with the law will result into just consequences. All in all, justice is meant more for the society because it is designed to prove constantly that people are safe within their society. Victims will be given proper justice for the damages or loses the have suffered because criminals will be caught, trialled and punished. In general, we may conclude that justice is what keeps the world safe.

What I have learned:

I have learned that in the world we live in, fairness or equality is very important. Justice is something we and the state need to persevere on.

Integrative questions:

- 1) How important is justice?
 - 2) How can we attain justice?
 - 3) What are the things that hinder justice?
 - 4) Is justice only for the wealthy?
 - 5) Is justice fairness?
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