

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?

