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ITETHIC

Book: Contemporary Moral Problems

Title: Chapter 1: Ethical Theories (Aristotle: Happiness and Virtue)

Internet Reference:

<http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534517242>

Learning Expectations:

To know more about happiness and virtue according to Aristotle

To broaden learning on morality through this reading

Quote:

"...With regard to feelings of fear and confidence, courage is the mean; of the people who exceed, he who exceeds in fearlessness has no name, while the man who exceeds in confidence is rash, and he who exceeds in fear and falls short in confidence is a coward."

Book Review:

I have always enjoyed my life to the fullest. For 20 years that I have been living, I experienced pain, misery, loss and failures. But I also had equal share of happiness, there were times that I felt satisfied and contented with the presence of my family and friends. I achieved success in my own little way. Aristotle, in this part, stressed out the "intermediate", meaning the half of an excess and deficiency. Enough is enough at all times. One must focus in making only the means for which we don't do any harm to ourselves and others. There are also times in my life where I exhibited excess or abuse in something I did. For example, there was this time when I had too much too drink. When I got home, all the gates were locked so I climbed my way up and it ended at me stumbling to the floor and my shorts got wrecked. The doors were locked too. I wasn't able to call help because my cell phone batteries were dead. So that left me no choice but to sleep outside. And I did, I slept on top of our car. I was like a feline in that night. I too, have exercised deficiency. There were those times when I felt lazy towards the completion of school works. I ended up getting poor grades. Aristotle taught me to limit myself of doing more and less in everything that I will do.

What I have learned:

I have learned that virtue acts as an intermediate, the mean in relation with excess and deficiency.

Integrity Questions:

1. Why is virtue important?
2. If a man is happy, is he morally correct in everything he does?

Review Questions:

1. What is happiness, according to Aristotle? How is it related to virtue? How is it related to pleasure?

- Happiness, as Aristotle described it, *"Happiness, above all else, is held to be; for this we choose always for itself and never for the sake of something else, but honour, pleasure, reason and every virtue we choose indeed for themselves, but we choose them also for the sake of happiness, judging that by means we shall be happy."*

2. How does Aristotle explain moral virtue? Give some examples.

- Aristotle wrote, *"Moral virtue is a mean, then, and in what sense it is so, and that it is a mean between two vices, the one involving excess, the other deficiency, and that is in such because its character is to aim at what is intermediate in passions and in actions, has been sufficiently stated."* My own example would be about choosing to spend more or lesser time working out in a gym. If you chose to lift weights more time than you normally would, your muscles are going to be strained. If you then chose to spend less time, your muscles will "sleep".

3. Is it possible for everyone in our society to be happy, as Aristotle explains it? If not, who cannot be happy?

- No, Aristotle claimed that *"Animals have no share in happiness, being completely deprived of such activity...none of the other animals is happy, since they in no way share in contemplation."*

Discussion Questions:

1. Aristotle characterizes a life of pleasure as suitable for beasts. But what, if anything, is wrong with a life of pleasure?

- Too much pleasure will drive a person to be dependent of that activity. We must know how to limit ourselves and be mature enough to impose such limitations. Too much of something is bad enough.

2. Aristotle claims that the philosopher will be happier than anyone else. Why is this? Do you agree or not?

- Philosophers achieved the gift of profound knowledge. He sees things in a different perspective compared to a commoner. He perceives truth and from that he exudes happiness and contentment in himself.