



ON ETHICS AND BEING ETHICAL

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Ethics is equated to moral philosophy or the concept of right and wrong behavior. We often hear expressions like: ethically-correct behavior; unethical practice; ethics beyond reproach, and some other related ones. Ethics is difficult to put in a specific boxed definition since what can be considered ethically appropriate in one culture is sometimes considered ethically-reprehensible in another. A lot of literature has focused on ethics, and the ones we used back in college seemed to me back then to be more relevant to logic and philosophy, and there can be too much philosophizing for any one person to bear. Hence, I don't remember much from my studies on ethics.

Lest I be taken to be a total reprobate, I have my own values on ethics that I subscribe to. Like, I found it unconscionable when the supermarket cashier refuses to give me my 40-centavo-change simply because the coins that correspond to them are often ignored. So I carry a coin purse that has various denominations of the Philippine peso in it. In like manner, a product that is not punched in by the cashier by mistake I immediately call attention to, even coming back on another day to point the fact out. I wouldn't want my favorite supermarket to be shortchanged, too, in the same manner that I do not wish to be shortchanged. Do unto others what you would have others do unto you. I live by the Golden Rule, despite what the rest of the world says. I believe that that is all we have to live by, and we'll be fine.

I am not ethically perfect. I have had my share of evil thoughts and actions also. I have harbored less-than-desirable grudges and thinking along the way. I am human, after all. That's one thing I have consistently found out on my journey through life. There's no such thing as perfect beings; we have been created equal in our imperfections. Where others are perfect of face, they may not entirely be perfect of body. Where there are those who are intellectually-gifted, they may be less physically-endowed or something. That is the truth. The Lord knows what we need and provides it accordingly, each to his own rights. God does not play favorites.

Ethics is often a one-person matter: whatever you consider appropriate or just or true, others do not have the right to question. Ethics comes bundled with free will, the determination to do what you must when you must according to your own standards. Philosophers like Plato and Confucius gave us guidelines, but the ultimate decision, the ethics to stand by those very guidelines lie in no one else but ourselves.

Such is the true concept of true and false, of right and wrong.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. In your opinion, should we always stick to the teachings of philosophers like Confucius and Plato? Why or why not?
2. What specific teachings of Confucius do you subscribe to? Why?
3. Why is ethics quite difficult to study?
4. Is there a specific person you admire for his/her ethical practices? Why do you admire him/her?
5. Give examples of what you were taught by your parents to be ethical behavior. How was their teaching of such behavior reinforced?