An Assignment Submitted by

Name of Student

Name of Establishment

Class, Section, Date

The Difference Between Moral and Non-Moral Issue

Every day we are to choose what way we should go; decide do or do not; make first step to answer complicated questions. We have to face the problems and deal with them. We have to take new issues every hour. The most difficult and the most important questions we ask ourselves are the questions about morality. Because our answer for this questions truly defines who we actually are. It often said that morality makes people better, because their actions are aimed to the goodness, kindness, changing world to better and helping people. Moral is a very wide area of knowledge and today we will focus on some narrow topic to research it. I will talk about the spheres where the morality can be applied and where it can be not. So we will talk about moral, non-moral, and, clearly, immoral issues. Ernest Hemingway said: "About morals, I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after". This is not a definition of these terms, but it makes everything more clear. So, there we always have a problem with moral and non-moral issues – what are they, actually, and how can we differ one from another? It is important to know the answer for these questions, because it'll be easier for us to deal with moral and non-moral issues. I think, that the main difference between moral and non-moral issue is in the possibility to apply the category of morality to one or another issue.

The question of moral issues and morality as itself is very important. Morality is the one of the main themes in philosophical, ethical and sociological studies. For example, the most famous and respected writers and philosophers wrote about the problem of morality. They are Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Confucius, Thomas Aquinas, Immanuel Kant, Georg Hegel, Sigmund Freud, Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Jurgen

Habermas… They did a great job because today we have plenty of structured systems of morality, which can explain, what the morality is, and how it can be provided in our life, and what influence it has on us. The morality was even considered as an argument in the discussion about the existence of God. The amount of works, dedicated to the question of the morality, is obviously great, and this can persuade us in the importance of the questions of moral values. Focusing on the hypothesis that I've formulated in the introduction, I will explain my ideas using the help of great philosophers, writers and scientists, and I will illustrate my point of view with some examples.

I should start with the understanding of moral issue. We can know about morality from ethics, anthropology or psychology. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2002) says that morality is a term that can be used "either descriptively to refer to some codes of conduct put forward by a society or, some other group, such as a religion, or accepted by an individual for her own behavior or normatively to refer to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons. Actually, what "morality" is taken to refer to plays a crucial, although often unacknowledged, role in formulating ethical theories. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy also says, that if take "morality" to refer to an actually existing code of conduct put forward by a society results in a denial that there is a universal morality, one that applies to all human beings. "This descriptive use of "morality" is the one used by anthropologists when they report on the morality of the societies that they study".

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy also says that recently, some comparative and evolutionary psychologists have taken morality, or a close anticipation of it, to be present among groups of non-human animals, primarily other primates but not

limited to them. "Morality" has also been taken to refer to any code of conduct that a person or group takes as most important".

And if I try to summarize my whole personal knowledge about morality, I'd say that morality is the all the decisions we make, all the intentions we have, and all the actions we do in our willing to accord to some moral code. Moral code is a system, which recognizes what is right or good, and what is wrong or bad. So, the morality is the personal way to act accordingly to some moral code that this person has. In such a way, the moral issue is the problem which can have good or bad solution according to the moral code. This means that we can apply moral teaching or rules to this issue to define and solve it. In other words, if you can judge an issue due to your moral code, than this issue can be called as the moral issue.

Norman J. Bull says that every moral issue is solute due to within the context of a concrete situation. He says that it'll be shaped and molded – though not determined – by the situation. As history never repeats itself, save in broad patterns of similarity, so moral situations are never identically the same, save in their board parts of similarity. The implication of this situational factor are the far-reaching, and "it will be one of the major concerns" (Norman J. Bull, 1969)

Talking about examples, we should decide which moral code we will take to start. For some people the best moral teaching is the Bible – all Christian people build their understanding of the morality on this book. According to the Bible, it is not moral to lie, to cheat, to make a tattoo (but there we should consider that this is a moral issue only when we talk about Christians), to make an abortion, to steal and so on. There we can

see, that some very unexpected questions became to be moral issue in Christian world. But some of them are common for other religions, teachings and for atheist people too.

To prove my point of view, I will take some opposite thoughts, from the "Critique of The Practical Reason" of Immanuel Kant and "The Concept of Morals" of Walter Terence Stace.

Immanuel Kant said that the morality of people can be a proof that God exists – because if there's no god, why people keep acting this way? And where from do they know what is good and what is bad? (Here I should mention, that Fyodor Dostoevsky in the book "The Possesed" (1872) said almost the same thing. He talked about the morality in the way of God's gift to us. And if there's no God, then again, why people keep acting the moral way? If there's no God, everything is allowed! "If there is no God, then I am God.")

On the other hand, Walter Terence Stace (1937) said that morality is doubtless human. It has not descended upon us out of the sky. He says that morality has grown out of the human nature, and is relative to it. W. T. Stace says that we must accept the fact that we couldn't have our morality apart from nature, any meaning whatever.

I'm telling this not because I want to persuade you to believe in god, or not. I think, that is not very moral to persuade people into some faith. I want to show that Immanuel Kant and Walter Terence Stace have noticed the same thing that we have just said: some issues are moral for very different people, with very different perspectives on life. This means, that usually everyone have some common rules in moral code, which are useful and understandable for many people. In other words, we often believe that to steal, to kill, to cheat, and to lie is bad. This unites people and, in the same time, this is

what makes people really united. And as for me, the most effective rule, the first thesis in

my moral code, the most important thing is that one should treat others as one would like

others to treat oneself. This is the first thing you can think of when you can't define,

whether the issue is moral or non-moral? This rule explains why people can have

common moral codes while being so different, and I believe that this rule can be accepted

by everyone. And when you accept it, you begin to make out your own moral values,

which can help you to find a right way through the difficult situations and to define which

issue is moral, and to find a solution for it.

This is very important, because sometimes the hardest decisions are made only

due to your moral values, and only in such a way you can became a really good person.

The wonderful thing is, you can help others to be better, to act right, and to behave

themselves. The morality of everyone will make this world such a nice place. Someone

can say that this is utopia and I will agree, but no one can judge me for such a

daydreaming.

So, we have defined, what moral issue is, what the morality is, and what we can

do to make right decisions during finding the solutions for this complicated questions.

Going on, now we should decide what the non-moral issue is. I think that there's a

misunderstanding and people can not understand the difference between non-moral and

immoral action. Let's see. I think, that immoral action is the one, that can be certainly

defined as "bad" accordingly to the moral code. For example, if your neighbor cheats on

his wife with his secretary, this is definitely immoral action. But, non-moral issue is the

question, that can't be solved with any help of the moral rules. This is not because non-

moral issues are very complicated. This is because moral values just can not be provided here, they have no power and no meaning there.

For example, deciding what you will have for dinner today, what clothes to put on, how to make your hair today is not making a solution for moral issue. These questions are non-moral.

I think that to define which issue is moral and which is not is very important for every person. Because this makes you to choose the best decision in complicated situation. Judging what issue is moral and which is non-moral means that the solution for these problems will be right, or, at least, better, than when you do not understand the difference. This is the question about areas of morality; it's like dealing with some science. You can't apply grammar rules for the geometry or physics; this is just very different subjects, areas of knowledge, and levels of perception. Using moral code as a way to solute the non-moral issue cannot give you a good result, because every time you want to answer some question, you should search for the rules from the same area of knowledge.

However, there can be difficult variations of such issues, which appear when different cultures, religions or just different people meet each other. I will try to give some examples and explain, how it can be, that the difference between moral and non-moral issues is not quite clear.

Let's take for the first example some Muslim rules. For example, it is forbidden for Muslim woman to show off her legs, hands and chest. This is the strict rule of the Islamic religion and that's why Muslim women wear hijab to cover their body. But it is an uncommon thing for that people who are not Muslims, because we have no such

beliefs or rules. Here we can see that the problem "what I should wear today?" is becoming moral issue. Islamic religion is somehow a moral code for Muslims, and they compare their every step to these recommendations. And, if the Muslim woman does not wear a hijab, it is often a sin, it is often immoral in the universe of Islamic religion. Such a step will be judged as "bad", "sinful" and "wrong", and so we can see, that a non-moral issue becomes an important moral problem, and can be judged with the help of moral code. I think, the appearance of such situation is not bad or wrong – this is the rule of the religion, and it can't be judged, because it is an area of history, of traditions, of nation, and, of course, the question of faith. You just shouldn't judge people for having their faith, I think.

Talking about clothes, here we can have another example, more simple and common, I think. As for me, it is not very well, if the girl is wearing a very short skirt. I just think that showing off your legs in streets is not very modest. I think that it's better and more moral to wear some clothes that do not show your body to everyone who looks at you. I just think so, and for me, wearing such clothes is the question of morality. This is non-moral situation, if you wear a bright-colored skirt or black one, but it is moral issue, if you choose an extremely short skirt instead of wearing a longer one. This is how I think. But it is not a question of morality for some girls who actually wear such clothes, because they don't think that they should hide their beauty or something like this. This example illustrates how the simple question of clothes can be moral and non-moral issue at one time.

Another example we can find in Christianity. As I've already told, it is forbidden for Christian to make a tattoo. It is written in Bible, and for Christians, the Bible is the

moral code, which forms their morality. So, making a tattoo is a sinful step, which will be rated as "bad" and "wrong" in Christian religion. But today this is very common thing for guys and ladies to make a tattoo and not even once. In such way they try to express themselves, to leave a memory of something on their bodies, or to make it more beautiful. Tattooing today is the sphere of art, but this sphere is immoral in Christian religion. This turns to us in a very unexpected side – can art be judged in a moral categories? Is it an area of morality? And which conclusions can we make about artists who make the art that can be considered as "immoral"? As for me, the area of art is definitely non-moral area, but there were a lot of examples when the artists and their creations were judged by the society or particular people. I think, that the art is the sphere of esthetic and beauty, and the only question here can be raised, is the questions about tastes. But, as it is said, you can argue about tastes. Such a paradox.

In Judaism, it is a sin to kill an animal for meat in "wrong" way. This is one method to make the meat not kosher and such a food Jewish people can not eat. There are many types of not kosher food in Judaism, but let's focus on meat. To make a meat kosher, the animal should be killed and carved as it is written in Torah. But for people, who are not Jewish, or who do not referred to the Judaism rules, there's no need to eat kosher meat. That is how the question "what I should it today?" becomes from non-moral issue to a moral one in different perspective on the world.

There also can be mentioned vegetarians, that think that killing and eating animal in general is a very immoral act. This is a very interesting point of view, I'd say, very humanistic perspective. It takes the whole question of nutrition to the absolutely new

level – level of morality. And there we can say, that question of what is moral to eat is a question of biology, sociology and anthropology referred to the area of morality.

As you can see, there's a common point of view on what moral and non-moral issues are. But people are different and the situations can be judged by them very unexpectedly. You can never know for sure, whether your acts are normal due to other people's. And also you can never know if is your moral code can be accepted or just rated as "really moral" to others. This is a very complicated question of perspective and you should always remember this.

It is very important to know, whether it is moral or non-moral issue, but it is also important to know, that you can't be the resource of the definite truth. It's better not to judge another people according to your moral code and rules, because this is not very fair. You know, your moral code can be based on some knowledge, believes, religion and experience. But some people can just not have one! They can have no such knowledge, or less experience, than you, or have no faith in their heart, and just be lost in their life…
There are a lot of different situations that can happen to people, and you can never know, what exactly had happened with them. That's why you shouldn't criminate poor people on the streets or someone who is not well-educated and hardly writes his name. You can't blame them for having no ambitions or being so indifferent to life. Because even if you have your moral code, you can judge only yourself, but not other people.

Martin Buber in his work "Images of good and evil" (1952) said that there are a lot of problems of moral judgments and constitutive instability of moral values, and the human reality is very specific in this way. So, you shouldn't judge anyone, because you

really just have no ability to do it. Better help them to get some moral rules or just knowledge to achieve the morality.

In the end of my essay, in order to demonstrate, how the area of my hypothesis is wide, I want to share with you the thoughts of David Marshall Smith, who learned the difference between moral and non-moral issues too.

He says that values refer to some desirable or worthy aspect of life. A distinction is often made between the moral values of good and right and the non-moral values of beauty and truth. This might suggest the independence of a "moral dimension of life from aesthetic and scientific dimensions". For something to be valued by human being as moral code, it must be human, necessary for his life capable of making human life better. Thus the morally valuable entities must be "capable of having interests of doing well". (David Marshall Smith, 2000). I think that this quote shows us, how the problem of morality in general, and the question of difference between moral and non-moral issue, in particular, is really deep and thoughtful. And there is so much to think and talk about.

To make a conclusion, we should remember what was said on the beginning. The difference between moral and non-moral issue is in the possibility to apply the moral rules to the problem to solute it. Moral issue is the issue that asks for answer to the questions from the morality area. In other words, you can use your moral code as a unity of rules to solute the moral issue. Moral code can be based on the some knowledge, experience or believes you achieve during your life. Also it can be taken from the religious teachings. Bible, Quran, Torah and many other books of religions are taken as written moral codes for people who practice these religions. People are different and their moral codes are different too, but it is often that people (consciously or not) have one

common moral rule: one should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself. A non-moral issue is that one, for solving which you do not need to look for some moral rules, because they cannot been applied for the solution. The non-moral issues are the issues that exist out of the boards of the morality. But there can be examples, when the non-moral issue becomes a moral one, if we look from different point of view of different moral codes. Also we saw, how different questions, very banal and unexpected ones, can be raised to the whole new levels of perception. The aspect of moral raises these questions to the levels of science and we can really do some studies about. On the other hand, these examples brightly illustrated that everything is relative, and you can't judge anyone due to your personal moral code. This is unfair. The best thing you can do to make this world better, it's to help someone to learn about morality, and to define moral issue and non-moral one. So we saw, how the simple question about differences between moral and non-moral issues can be so deep and complicated.

References

Rae S. B. Moral Choices. (2009) http://books.google.com.ua/books?id=xxa-

DtB51QwC&printsec=frontcover&dq=moral&source=bl&ots=3HVk24IZJG&sig

=4h-DeVadn3sR-

GxKsJO2rGNupHE&hl=ru&sa=X&ei=o11SUNOMJsrHtAbs_oGIDA&redir_esc

=y#v=onepage&q=moral&f=false

Fisher J. M. Perspectives of Moral Responsibility (1993)

http://books.google.com.ua/books?id=0ncN3TuDQ7cC&printsec=frontcover&dq

=moral&source=bl&ots=3R0VH1Ui11&sig=e3l3cu147bKaK1Cr4DQPw5nlCDU

&hl=ru&sa=X&ei=o11SUNOMJsrHtAbs_oGIDA&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=

moral&f=false

Harding C. G. Moral Dilemmas and Ethical Reasoning (1985)

http://books.google.com.ua/books?id=edEpzIqBKkAC&printsec=frontcover&dq=

moral&source=bl&ots=vxDEjrKNMs&sig=iQClMTnWmhPpd9A9EIrOLqyDus

M&hl=ru&sa=X&ei=ol9SUP7cK4bXsga_uIHoCQ&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=

moral&f=false

Kant I. The Critique of Practical Reason. (1788)

http://philosophy.eserver.org/kant/critique-of-practical-reaso.txt

Dostoevsky F. The Possesed (Devils) (1871) Oxford University Press,

http://www.amazon.com/Devils-Possessed-Oxford-Worlds-Classics/dp/0192838296

Smith D. M. Moral Geographies. Ethics in the World of Difference (2000) Edinburg

University Press

http://books.google.com.ua/books?id=g3sOhukoPxUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=

moral&source=bl&ots=8WlXM4FM1q&sig=v1ca6j-

N8JxwUrybDw7ySzymgPQ&hl=ru&sa=X&ei=vyhSUMmfD4jDswafzIBw&redir

_esc=y#v=onepage&q=moral&f=false

Habermas J. Moral consciousness and communicative action (1990) Massachusetts

Institute of Technology

http://books.google.com.ua/books?id=fmYjgiUMy7EC&printsec=frontcover&dq

=moral&source=bl&ots=-

9dN65CbDo&sig=6eNUVCPc1cWfs3HBXAtDLXdII4w&hl=ru&sa=X&ei=UzJ

SUM3IKIXzsgbb24GQBA&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=moral&f=false

Buber M. The Good and Evil (1952) The Prentice Hall, NJ, 143 pages.

Herman B. The Practice of Moral Judgment (1993)

http://books.google.com.ua/books?id=RzdYu_6TzZ8C&printsec=frontcover&dq

=moral&source=bl&ots=M_Y5TpGyXd&sig=R2s65ed-K6-

UTvfDHxiKREzUWlQ&hl=ru&sa=X&ei=ol9SUP7cK4bXsga_uIHoCQ&redir_e

sc=y#v=onepage&q=moral&f=false

Reporting Diversity. How Journalists Can Contribute to Community Cohesion (2004)

The Media Trust, London

http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/151921.pdf

Field Listing: Religions (2006) Central Intelligence Agency https://www.cia.gov/about-

cia/index.html

Stace W.T. The Concept of Morals (1937) Macmillan and Co., London

http://archive.org/stream/conceptofmorals029360mbp#page/n7/mode/2up

The Definition of Morality (2002) Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/morality-definition/

Philosophy: Ethics, Ethical Terms: Moral, Nonmoral and Immoral (2009) Philosophy

Courses http://philosophy.lander.edu/index.html