

Stereotypes for autistic people



Many people believe that autistic people in order to make moral decisions these human beings have to be able to have compassion, or condolence, for one another. In order to have compassion you have to have the ability to empathize that is that you have to understand and share the feelings of another. However, Jeannette Kennett a philosophy professor at the National University explains in her essay "Autism, Empathy and Moral Agency" that it is possible for autistic people to make moral decisions without the ability to empathize while hearing to a logical moral code.

Kennett in her essay compares psychopaths to autistic people in order to explore the question Do autistic people have the capacity to distinguish right from wrong? She believes that autistic people can distinguish right from wrong by hearing to a strict moral-rational code. In the book, "The curious incident of the dog in the night-time" by Mark Haddon, shares the story of the character who is autistic. Christopher is frequently put in the position where he has to make moral decisions and be morally precautious.

Because he is able to hear to his rational moral code I believe that Christopher is able to make moral decisions. Christopher is able to show his moral concern when he sees his rat "Toby" in danger. Kennett insists that autistic people can still have moral agency because, they are able to conform to a rational moral code (357). Christopher is able to show his moral agency, his ability to make judgments, throughout his relationship with his rat. For example in one scene, "Toby" runs out in the subway tracks and Christopher runs to rescue his rat even though his putting in risk his own life.

Everyone sitting around him recognizes that Christopher is acting kind of crazy because he is putting his life at risk for an insignificant a rat that he just rescued (182). Who does that? Christopher didn't care about anything else other than he was worried that " Toby", his rat would not have enough food or a home to survive and he possibly could die by this action we can observe that Christopher had an instinct of protection and love for what he cared the most, his rat.

Another reason on how Christopher is able to show that he can distinguish right from wrong is when his dad tells Christopher that he has to stop finding out who killed Wellington (28). Christopher understands that he is going against of what his dad requested of him. We have to remember that Christopher is a kid that associates, empathies, well to animals but he is not able to understand the human behavior or emotions. In Kennett's essay, she expresses that autistic people are capable of being moved directly by the thought that some consideration constitutes a reason for action (357).

Even though Christopher knew that disobeying his father was wrong, he continued with his investigation that let him discover no one but more than one secret. In order to determine if an action is right or wrong, Christopher has to have some sort of guideline by which to judge the action, which he does have sense of duty that is why he is able to distinguish right from wrong. In the book, Christopher is confronted to make a moral decision on whether he uses his Swiss Army knife or not.

He admits that he is not afraid of using his Swiss Army Knife if he has to because; he is defending himself from danger. In this scene, Christopher

shows his feelings towards strangers it is in fact a moral decision that Christopher has to go make. However, Kennett tell us that capable autistic people have the tendency to have a Kantian-a generalized moral concern, what we might call a sense of duty or a conscience- approach to moral thinking (350-352). Christopher says, “ If I kill them it would be in self-defense and I won't go to prison” (44).

He definitely knows what he is able to do. For instance, he has the power to choose whether or not to use his knife. He has a very radical way of thinking. He also emphasizes that if he gets hurt first then he would take action which is what most people would do in the same case I believe. This shows how an autistic person actually can have some moral concern and also has the ability to make a decision of not doing something that he knows it would be or is wrong. Jeannette Kennett explains at the end of her essay that moral agency's absence can be harmful.

“ Only individuals who are capable of being moved directly by the thought that some consideration constitutes a reason for action can be conscientious moral agents” (357). At the end of the book, Christopher had accomplished every goal that he set up for himself. “ I know I can do this because... I solved the mystery of who killed Wellington? ... and I was brave... that means I can do anything” (221). Ultimately, what is at stake here is what Kennett emphasizes that it is not necessary empathize with people in order to make moral decisions.

Although Christopher's story may seem insignificant, it is in fact crucial in terms of today's concern over autism and how people is treating other

people specially the ones that have disabilities. People should be more compassionate about them, and being more open-minded about people with disabilities because, those people are very capable has become very successful. So, society should learn from this book that they don't have to pay attention to the stereotypes because these are underestimating people.