

Rationality as only a social mask



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Rationality as only a social mask: Looking at the levels of human moral motive... Human moral conduct is not a natural occurrence. As human beings, it is not in our instinct to follow codes of morality and ethics.

Therefore, we must look behind the motives of moral behavior to discover the end to which it is a means. In reflecting upon the writings of Freud and Nietzsche, it can be surmised that the basis of the human moral motive is control; control over our environment, control of our natural instincts, and control over others.

The establishment of a moral code was first necessitated with the introduction of organized society. To ensure the peace and security of the community members, all members must agree to restrict their natural desires for satisfaction. Through the establishment of public laws, restriction of instincts by each individual ensures that all members are free from the negative effects of the actions of others. The establishment of public laws requires individuals to sacrifice their natural instincts toward aggression and fulfillment of their animal desires.

Thus, morality serves as a control mechanism over man's environment. The rules and laws of society act as a suppression of our natural tendency towards aggressiveness. " The replacement of the power of the individual by the power of a community constitutes the decisive step of civilization. "

(Freud 49) Therefore, moral behavior, (actions considered within the limits of the law), is essentially the individual's denial of how he truly wishes to act and this suppression of his instincts allows man the feeling of control over a world which prior to he was at the mercy of its' unanticipated events.

I regard the bad conscience as the serious illness that man was bound to contract under the stress of the most fundamental change he ever experienced—that change which occurred when he found himself finally enclosed within the walls of society and of peace. ” (Nietzsche 84) As an individual, man is at will to act only according to his natural tendencies, without regard to their effects on others. It is in the suppression of these wills (in accordance with the laws of society) where lies man’s feeling of moral obligation.

It was in this sphere then, the sphere of legal obligations, that the moral conceptual world of “ guilt”, “ conscience”, “ duty”, “ sacredness of duty” had its origin. ” (Nietzsche 65) Our feelings of guilt within ourselves arise from our betrayal of the prescribed action and the redirection of our instinctual aggressions. Freud explained this in terms of the struggle between the ego and the super-ego. The super-ego, in the form of a conscience, “...is ready to put into action against the ego the same harsh aggressiveness that the ego would have like to satisfy upon other, extraneous individuals. (Freud 84)

In this matter, man is using his super-ego’s concept of morality to control his own natural instincts which he feels must be tamed. This provides him with a sense of self-control. Also at work in the concept of guilt is the notion of indebtedness for his sinful action. And individual feels an obligation to act in accordance to the indicated code of moral conduct and when he fails to, he feels as a debtor does towards his creditor. He feels he should suffer in order to balance the debt.

To the extent that to make suffer was in the highest degree pleasurable, to the extent that the injured party exchanged for the loss he had sustained an extraordinary counterbalancing pleasure: that of making suffer. (Nietzsche 65) Man himself has assumed the role of his own creditor to which he is in debt to. He is thus establishing himself as master of his actions. In addition to thinking of man as controller of his own objective morality, we must look at the source of these moral truths.

When viewing morality as fabricated, that is, moral behavior defined by established laws, we see that morality may be manipulated and used as a power leverage. Man's moral actions are at the will of those defining this behavior. There is an absence of an objective good and bad which leaves it open to manipulation by those seeking control over societal values. Those in power may use morality to gain advantage and justify states of affairs, such as their legitimacy as power holders.