

A moral evaluation of child labor in the philippines

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A Moral Evaluation of Child Labor in the Philippines in the Perspective of Immanuel Kant's Second Formulation of Categorical Imperative- Formula of End Itself Introduction Children are the prime movers of the country. They are very much endowed with so much potentialities in which may contribute for the betterment of the many. They are indeed really important in everybody's life not only of their own family but also of their fellow human persons. Every person including the child must be respected and valued in virtue of his/her being a human person.

Thus, children must and necessarily be treasured by valuing their own dignity as human persons capable of rationalizing for the betterment of the future. However, in the Philippines; most of the children in the past and even until now are being exploited in many different ways. Every child in this country is somehow in the state of danger because the child may be abused at anytime, anywhere, and of anyone. Evidently, Philippines is a young country by which most of the people are composed of youth and/or children. By this, Philippines is very vulnerable to any forms of child exploitation.

Similarly, one of the most evident forms of child exploitation in the Philippines is the child labor. Child labor is prevalent in the Philippine society. It should be noted that children are abused by forcing them to bare labor at their very young age. They are supposed to be in the classroom to learn and become educated but because of child labor they could be seen in many places working to earn a living. Because of child labor, it is evidently that children at their very young age are dehumanized. Their own inherent

dignity has been taken away from them and thus makes children as objects of exploitation.

Moreover, the researcher has decided to conduct a study on this matter to find out the reality of this phenomenon. The researcher wants to assess the morality of child labor in the Philippines and to see its moral implications to other moral agents. Through the aid of Immanuel Kant's ethical concept, the researcher may find philosophical and moral basis of child labor. The philosophy of Kant particularly his Categorical Imperative and its second formulation- Formula of end itself- will be applied in the subject matter.

Library research, internet surfing, journals, and other sources related to the study will be used to achieve the main objectives. By this, the study is reliable and substantial in nature. The substantiality of the study focuses on the child labor in the Philippines. Body The Categorical Imperative Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative clearly states that "act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (Kant, 1964, p. 88).

By this very definition of categorical imperative, Kant contends that morality involves universality and necessity. That is, morality should be applicable to all, and the action must and necessarily be done. Kant distinguishes between two imperatives- categorical and hypothetical. The latter for Kant cannot be the standard of morality since it only applies to some and thus cannot be universalized. It comes to man's selfish inclination since it is only a "necessary as a means to the attainment of something else that one wills" (Kant, 1964, p. 2) and therefore this cannot be accepted. On the one hand, categorical imperative derive from rational inclination where in reason is that

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which makes the categorical imperative universal. For Kant, categorical imperative is based on human reason because it must be “entirely a priori, since here we do not enjoy the advantage of having its reality given in experience and so if being obliged merely to explain, and not to establish, its possibility” (Kant, 1964, p. 87).

This, however, does not mean that Kant totally rejected the consequence of any action to determine whether the action is morally right or wrong but he only emphasize the rational faculty of man to act morally which is universal and necessary. Kant further expound his moral philosophy by presenting the four formulations derive from categorical imperative but only the second formulation shall be discussed in the succeeding section because it is the focal point which is needed in the study, formula of end itself. Formula of End Itself

This second formula of Kant stresses the value of human person. It states that “act in such a way that you will always treat humanity whether in your own person or in the person of any other never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end” (Kant, 1964, p. 96). In this formula, Kant argues that any person should not be used as a mere tool or instrument for the attainment of something else. Every human person then has inherent value regardless of his/her culture, physical stature, nationality, and the like. Thus, every human person has dignity.

He added, human person should not be used as a mean because of the person's rationality. It is his/her rational faculty that which makes man a man and thus should be respected and developed further. Human person is always treated as end because his/her “rational nature exists as an end in

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itself" (Kant, 1964, p. 96). Kant explains his contention about man's inherent dignity by distinguishing inherent value from instrumental value. The latter primarily are the things which do not have innate value such as money, food, and any material beings.

Things such as those are really intended to the service for the human person. They are just the means and not the ends of themselves. "Beings whose existence depend, not on our will, but on nature, have nonetheless, if they are non-rational beings only a relative value as means and consequently called things" (Kant, 1964, p. 86) as Kant says. Thus, it cannot be that the things around us will be regarded as an end for they could only have value when they are being used but after they are being used, then their value is lost. So to say, things only have temporal value.

In contrary, human persons are "persons because their nature already marks them out as an ends in themselves- that is, as something which ought not to be used merely as means- and consequently imposes to that extent a limit on all arbitrary treatment of them (and is an object of reverence)" (Kant, 1964, p. 96). Here, Kant firmly justifies his contention on human value by reiterating the nature of man, rationality, as the prime factor by which every man should be considered as the finality of all actions. Man, in virtue of his/her reason, is the end and not as a mean which leads to his/her dignity.

Kant emphasizes more this second formulation by saying: Persons, therefore, are not merely subjective ends whose existence as an object of our actions has a value for us: they are objective ends- that is, things whose existence is in itself an end, and indeed an end such that in its place we can put no other

end to which they should serve simply as means; for unless this is so, nothing at all of absolute value would be found anywhere. But if all value were conditioned- that is contingent- then no supreme principle could be found for reason at all. (Kant, 1964, p. 96). Nevertheless, Kant presented in the second formulation of categorical imperative, formula of end itself, the value of man (man's dignity) which is justified by man's nature that is capable of reasoning. Thus, through and through, man regardless of anything has the absolute value of being as man higher than any other worldly beings. Child Labor The innocence of the child simply makes the child as a child. No other beings could have an equal innocence of the child except the child itself.

Child's innocence is very unique characteristic. It is self evident to every child that he/she possesses such quality. Since the child is born, innocence has already been inherited by the child. Innocence is not given to a child but it is already in every child without the influence from the outside. This innocence is equal among other children regardless of child's parental background, physical appearance, or culture. This equality is evidently true for the fact that every child is born naked, dependent, and innocent. Thus, every child, indeed, is innocent.

In the same way, this child's innocence is not static which stagnates on that particular stage but child also develop towards maturity. Every child has innate potentials and capacities to become adult. The child does not remain as a child forever but he/she is always going towards adulthood. However, most of the children especially in developing countries are being exploited and abused. Children at very young age have already engaged to dangerous

and oppressive labor. In the Philippines, it is prevalent that most of the children are working to earn money.

Children in such case could be seen in the streets, factories, or agricultural heavy activities. Definitely, children of those cases have bet their lives into death. Summing up these kinds of oppression of children, it water down to child labor. Child labor is a perennial societal problem not only of the other countries but also of this country- Philippines. Basically, children are expected to enjoy their childhood and should be in the school so as to develop their selves and discover their identity and skills.

Childhood is a complex stage of personhood where the child is starting to grow up with dependency to other persons especially of the children's parents. Children should be protected and nurtured because most of the children are exploited in many ways. This exploitation has become real because of child labor. Child labor is so rampant in the Philippines. Child labor prevents the natural and proper development of children. Thus, child labor has become a threat to every child's innocence. The Child Child, according to the law, is defined as person below eighteen (18) years of age.

Anyone who haven't yet attain the age of eighteen may considered as a child or youth. Nevertheless, that person below eighteen years has no civil obligation in the state. But when a person has attained the age of eighteen, " he/she is no longer considered a child and becomes automatically entitled to do all acts of civil life..." (Diokno, 1998). By this, a person then has the duty to follow the civil law and become responsible for any misconduct. Moreover, the child has been defined in a broader sense in conformity to R. A. 610 (Child Protection Law) which states that, " persons who below eighteen (18)

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years of age or those over but are unable to fully take care of themselves or protect themselves from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation, or discrimination because of physical or mental disability or condition” (Diokno, 1998). It should be noted that the term child in this Child Protection Law is in wider perspective because child refers not only to physical aspect of a person which could be seen empirically but it includes the inner dimension of the person.

The law states that a child is primarily be classified as incapable or less capable to protect itself because of disabilities from any harmful influence or oppression. Thus, it does not only imply that person over eighteen years of age may consider as adult or not anymore a child. This law is trying to emphasize the innocence and dependency of a person to persons outside itself. In addition, every child is endowed with rights of the society. Child at his/her young age must enjoy his/her childhood by giving to the utmost his/her needs as a child.

The child must be provided with his/her basic needs such as food, shelter, clothes, care, and education. Because the child is really dependent on others, it is imperative to care, protect, feed, and educate such child. These are important in the child’s development towards maturity. Thus, “ parents [should] go into all sorts of sacrifice to provide the highest educational opportunities for their children” (Andres & Ilada-Andres, 2005, p. 34). Child Work vs. Child Labor To understand the oppression happening in most of the children in the Philippines, it is better to distinguish and clarify these terms- child work and child labor.

Child labor, as defined by the ILO-IPEC, is work situations where children are compelled to work on regular basis to earn a living for themselves and their families, and as a result are disadvantaged educationally and socially; where children work in conditions that are exploitative and damaging to their health and to their physical and mental development; where children are separated from their families, often deprived of educational and training opportunities; where children are forced to lead prematurely adult lives. (Diokno, 1998). This definition implies then that any work which could harm and will destroy the development of a child, either physically or mentally or both, including his/her social and emotional aspects is regarded as child labor. In addition, work that which could hinder the child's education and his/her better future. Child labor is really an illness of the society which annihilates the child familial growth and that which really "deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity..." (About Child Labor, 2002).

Child labor, nevertheless, is a form of injustice in the society which needs to be responded by the authority and most especially "for those willing to stake their time and efforts to save the country's children" (Diokno, 1998). Child work, on the one hand, is very much different to child labor. Although, both of them have similarity because they are both engaging with work, child work deals with any activities which do not hinder the well-development of a child. Work that does not maltreat and exploit the child is classified as just.

Generally, if the work does not affect the development of a child's body and holistic dimensions, and also his/her education then that work could help the child and contributes positively (About child labor, 2002). Why Child Labor?

There are certain reasons on why child labor is continually happening in the Philippines. Child labor does not emerge out of the blue but it has come into reality brought by various problems. Thus, child labor is not the only problem in the Philippines but it becomes the result of combining societal problems. Basically, there are four prime reasons which cause this problem according to Jose W.

Diokno (1998) and these are poverty, tradition and culture, educational opportunity, and economy. The Philippines is one of the poorest countries in the world. Poverty has been regarded as the root-cause of many social problems in the country including child labor. Because of poverty, a big number of Filipino families are living in slums areas with limited food. Their hunger, which is needed to be satisfied, is pushing the families to work in any ways including their children. Thus, children cannot refuse to do so but “to satisfy basic requirements” (Diokno, 1998).

Although parents should work and earn a living for their children, their money is insufficient to sustain their needs and thus the parents has to decide that their children “ must work to help in their family’s struggle for survival” (Diokno, 1998) otherwise, the whole family will suffer from hunger. In Filipino cultural context, children are expected to work at their young age because it has been practiced by the people in the past. It has been a “ centuries-old tradition that the child must work through solidarity with the family” (Diokno, 1998) as a sign of respect and obedience to the Filipino culture.

Filipinos have the kind of mentality that a child must work “ to compensate... the economic burden that he/she represents and to share in the

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maintenance of his/her family” (Diokno, 1998). So to say, children have become the burden in the family. Moreover, every child at his/her young age has the responsibility to take share with the family’s needs especially of its financial matters. Thus, Filipino culture has regarded the children’s work “ as a phase of socialization where future roles are learned and working to share in the family is seen as training” (Diokno, 1998).

Lack of educational opportunity is one of the reasons of child labor it deprives children to learn and develop their skills as persons. Parents usually prefer not to send their children in school because of family’s home far distance to the school, opportunity to earn more money through children’s labor, or to the expensive cost of schooling. Nevertheless, family could not take this kind of education system because “ poor schooling has little credibility... since it does not promote economic improvement” (Diokno, 1998) in the family. Education is important yet the kind of education in the Philippines most of the time does not give learning quality to them and thus cannot contribute to be competitive individuals. Finally, the economy of the country has influenced child labor. The fact that the country is mostly composed of young people, the economy demands young workers. The economic sectors look for more profit and thus they employed children to work so as to pay minimally. Employers prefer to hire children because “ they represent docile work force, which could be hired and replaced at a fraction of adult wages” (Diokno, 1998) that which is an advantage for the employer.

Children could easily be exploited because they cannot refuse the opportunity to help their family through labor. The economy does not only

give good opportunities for progress but it also deteriorates the potentials and personhood of every child engages in “ hazardous work” (About Child Labor, 2002). Exploitation of Children Nevertheless, child labor is a perennial issue in the Philippines which slowly destroy the humanness of every child. This ethical issue is continually growing as the local government and international organizations are trying to eliminate this problem.

The United Nations (2008, p. 241) has recognized the value of children in particular as it issued the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that all human beings are born equal in dignity and rights. By this, it recognizes the inherent value of human persons including the children. Despite the attempts of the public and private organizations to terminate this societal problem, child labor is still do exist at the present. Some of these forms of child labor in the Philippines have been identified by the International Labor Organization (ILO).

It has been reported that children are abused in agricultural works such as the “ sakada,” domestic work where children are victims of child trafficking and physically, verbally, and/or sexual abuse. Manufacture where children work as adult employees with heavy labor, scavenger and street children because of extreme poverty, mining and quarrying where children work dangerously as they unravel minerals inside the mountains. Unconditional worst forms where children are very much exploited by recruiting them as to become child soldiers training them to fight in the battle field and young girls are said to be sex slaves which contribute to rostitution minors (What kind of work children do? , 2012). Analysis Human person in virtue of hi/her reason has innate dignity. This is a basic truth which man holds as he/she exists in

the world. To live in the world without dignity is futile. Man cannot live having without value to himself/herself and to others. His/her dignity gives man the right to be respected and protected. Man is quite different to other beings such as the material objects, plants, and animals precisely because man has a rational nature. Without it, man is perhaps the valueless being. So, man in nature is a dignified being.

Because the term man is used in this in general sense, it encompasses any human person including the children. Children are also human persons and thus they have rational faculty which in return causes their dignity. Every child, therefore, has inherent dignity. Child is, nonetheless, a mature rational individual but it does not compel the dignity of the child because the child even in that stage of childhood has the mind which continually develops as the child is going toward maturity. Reasoning of a child may differ to one another but it remains the dignity to the child because of the child's innate capacity of reasoning and rationalizing.

Thus, child is always endowed with reason which makes the child a dignified person. The dignity of a child must be respected, protected, and preserved. However, child labor makes the child undignified being. It is said that labor is different from work although both of them have similarity because the former pertains to involvement in economy while the latter is a general notion of any human activities. Human labor in a sense is not bad in itself because "through labor, man realizes and humanizes himself; ..." (Timbreza, 2008, p. 94). By this, labor also makes man a man because it distinguishes man to other beings.

Although reason primarily causes the distinction of man to other beings, labor has also become a factor which causes man to realize his/her humanness. Thus, labor does not only give negative implication but also good realization. However, child labor, although labor in form, is not the same with the true meaning of the word labor. In this context, child labor does not humanize children but it certainly dehumanizes every child. Child labor exploits and abuses the child in terms of heavy work which greatly affects the child's natural development.

Child labor is a form of oppression and it does not give any value to the child. Thus, child's dignity has been taken away because of child labor. In Kant's perspective, child's dignity is justified through his second formulation of categorical imperative- formula of end itself. His contention is that any human person in virtue of his rationality must be regarded as the end of all actions. Man should not be used as a mean to acquire something else. All action should be done by considering man as an end. Similarly, every child, regardless of anything except of his/her reason, must be regarded as an end in itself.

Reason will tell us that child's dignity is important. It is morally right, universal, and necessary that the child's dignity must be promoted. And any inhuman activity which destroys the dignity of the child must be eradicated especially child labor. Child labor, nevertheless, promotes oppressions and exploitations in which make the child a valueless human being. Such reasons of child labor like poverty, culture, educational opportunity, and demand of economy are nonetheless insufficient and unjustifiable reasons for the dignity of every child does not depend on these.

Poverty is a perennial societal problem in the Philippines and this issue is not new to everybody. By extreme poverty, the family members, including the child, are pushed to bare labor even though it is not yet proper to the child to do so. A child engaging in hard labor is not yet proper because the child is supposed to be in the home or in the school so as to develop himself/herself and eventually realizes his/her meaningful existence. It cannot be that the child labor is morally right because of poverty which gives way to a child earning money for the family.

Child here is not the end of labor precisely because labor is intended to get away from poverty but not for the sake of child's benefit. It uses the child to overcome poverty rather than dignifying the child without poverty. In the midst of poverty, a child must be dignified as a human person. The parents should sustain the needs of the family and the community should protect the dignity of every child. Culture and tradition, on the one hand, must not dehumanize the child. Every child must not be enslaved by the culture.

Culture also involves a matter of choice and thus anything which destroys the dignity of a child must be avoided and stopped. People are the makers of certain culture, and then people also have the capacity to change culture through man's rationality. Human person's rational faculty could obliterate such acquired and practiced culture and tradition. Nevertheless, culture in a way makes use of the child as a mean in order to continue such culture and not for the dignity of the child. This cannot be morally right that the child's dignity be destroyed because of culture. It is irrational to follow certain culture which dehumanizes a child.

Lack of educational opportunities and the demand of the economy, in the same way, make the child undignified human person in a way that they affect the natural development of a child. Lack of educational opportunities compels the right of the child to learn and to know his/her identity and demand of economy, in the same way, exploits the innocence of every child. They are both factors which give nevertheless worthless value to every child. In the end, children's dignity has been destroyed because of child labor. Child labor does not respect, protect, and nurture the humanness of every child.

Children in a sense have become mere objects to attain certain goal. They became instruments to alleviate poverty, maintain culture and tradition, victims of poor educational system, and exploited by economic interest. Child labor treated every child in a subjective end by which inclined by selfish interest. Objective end then must be realized and should be done so as to give dignity to every child. Summary and Conclusion The subject matter of this research study is about the morality of child labor. Through the second formulation of categorical imperative by Immanuel Kant, child labor has been assessed.

The definition and meaning of the term " child" also has been presented that which aging below eighteen (18) years and above yet holistically incapable to protect and dependent to other people because of mental or physical disabilities. The distinction between child labor and child work has been discussed also. After which, child labor then has been evaluated that which hinders the natural development of a child. The reasons of child labor have

been discussed in this study such as poverty, culture and tradition, lack of educational opportunity, and the demand of economy.

Kant's ethical ideas have been presented and discussed particularly the categorical imperative and its second formulation formula of end itself. Finally, the combining of facts and theory has been discussed in the analysis. In conclusion, child labor through evaluation using the second formulation of categorical imperative- end itself- of Kant is certainly unethical because it humiliates the dignity of every child. Child labor is the result of other societal problems and thus it should be answered. Certainly, child labor in effect gives an unethical implication in every child.

It is morally wrong that the dignity of every child should be taken away because of child labor. Child, in virtue of being a human person, is always endowed with gift of rationality by which makes every child unique and higher than any other temporal beings. Rationality gives the child to have the right to be respected. Child's dignity is innate in him/her thus it should be protected. Indeed, child labor is morally wrong because it primarily dehumanizes every child by destroying his/her dignity. Bibliography Primary: Kant, I. (1948). *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals* (H. J. Paton, Trans.). New York:

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