

The philosophy of morality

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There is restriction on freedom everywhere. This is a derived idea from the argument of Immanuel Kant in his work, *An Answer to the Question: "What is Enlightenment?"* This restriction is the reason why humans behave as they are: they need a harmonious environment within themselves as a pursuit of individual community of well-being, freedom and safety. Humans are not ultimately free as they could be because their actions have consequences. We may call these consequences, according to Kant, "imperatives for actions". The reason "why certain acts ought to be done is because they ought to be done" (Stratton-Lake, 2000).

Generally, a rational human being would do an action consciously for practical reasons, which is considered as hypothetically imperative. It demands that a person does such action for the sake of a purpose that he has in mind. Why Man should not break promises, why should not tell lies, why and should not commit suicide? This is because Man ought not do these acts. According to Kant, the reason why Man should keep his promises because of his "obligation to be consistent and the injunction against using others (i. e., against treating them only as means)" (Nasr, 2008). This is a concrete example of Kant's Ought principle of ethics.

"Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only" (Kant, 1785). A true ethical person would not use people to further his own end and he treats other people with respect to a value of dignity and not a value of price because a person with a value of dignity cannot be replaced and their value is priceless. An object with a value of price, as what the hypothetically

imperative person believes, can be exchanged and used as a means to achieve an end.

To Kant, this principle of humanity “ is the supreme limiting condition on the freedom of action of each man,” and argues that the principle is not founded on experience but rather seated in the footholds of a priori reasoning, reasoning that comes before experience. Indeed, Man’s actions are limited and the “ theoretical Ought of our judgments about facts, like the practical Ought of Ethics, is after all definable only in terms of what Kant called the Autonomy of Will” (Royce, 1901).

In fact, not only Kant recognized the limitations of the freedom of human Will and the actions that their will impose upon them and why Man obeys. Another philosopher who made a discourse on this ethical issue is Jonathan Edwards. He noted that there are “ ethics or the rules” (Tappan 1839), which are, in fact, not compelled to be obeyed by everyone but impose a strong power upon the conscience of the majority, especially those who believes in an Almighty being and those who do not want to feel the uneasiness of the evil and the persecuting nature of the Man.

Disobedience to these manly imposed rules are considered as a “ state of sinfulness” (Tappan 1839) or the corruption of human sensitivity disposed to violate the harmony and fitness of the spiritual constitution. This is another binding factor that makes man perform the hypothetically imperative actions.

Does morality purely exist? Morality is something that is not strongly defined, yet it is considered as the ultimate commandment of reason and

this is the guiding source for Man's duties and obligations. Even Kant argues in his *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals* that "it is only a pure philosophy that we can look for the moral law in its purity and genuineness." Human beings have moral obligations to each other, and, as previously mentioned, because of reasons that they need and not because of their pure will to do such obligations. Man, to be good to each other without qualification would be conceived as having a "good will" (Kant, 1785) and it must be understood, however, that humans do not have the autonomous will.

They have the morally good will to attain the practical ends that they wish to have. Moral philosophies follow the "laws of human will" as affected by nature and when applied to man, it does not borrow the least thing from the knowledge of man himself (anthropology), but gives laws a priori to him as a rational being. Moral laws require human judgment that has been sharpened through time and experience in order for them to be properly applied and for these laws to access the will of the man and "effectual influence on conduct" (Kant, 1785). The virtuous person does not only conform and obeys the moral law.

He also act for the sake of the moral law itself. Man's actions are morally right as determined by the virtue of their motives, derived not from Man's inclinations but from Man's duty. A virtuous person, who makes a morally right action, is determined to act in accordance with his duty and this duty overcomes that person's self-interests and hidden desires. And for Kant, the Ought of Ethics is the defining factor for morality: "the sense in which the

conduct of moral agent is to be judged as good or evil according as it does or does not conform to the standard of the Ought” (Royce, 1901)

As Kant have further argued in his philosophies, the ultimate moral law principle was abstractly conceived to guide man to the right action in life’s circumstances. However, if man is immature enough to acknowledge this guidance, enlightenment would never be achieved. Moreover, it is not only the lack of maturity that deter man and give him obstacles from being enlightened but also laziness, superstitious and dogmatic beliefs or fanaticism. “ Laziness and cowardice are the reasons why such a large proportion of men, even when nature has long emancipated them from alien guidance (naturaliter maiorennnes), nevertheless gladly remain immature for life” (Kant, 1784).

Enlightenment would result to freedom, and, if man is still of prejudices and dogmatic beliefs, Man would be nothing but an unthinking and leashed controlled being. Dogmas “ are the ball and chain of His permanent immaturity.” (Kant, 1784) If Man stays immature and an obedient being without reason, he would be an object without dignity, a mere machine.

Works Cited

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