

A CRITIQUE OF KANTIAN MORALITY  
FROM VIRTUE ETHICS PERSPECTIVE

SENIYE TİLEV

BOĞAZIÇI UNIVERSITY

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Seniye Tilev

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## Thesis Abstract

Seniye Tilev, “A Critique of Kantian Morality from Virtue Ethics Perspective”

In this thesis my aim is to provide an analysis of Kantian Morality from virtue ethics perspective. Kantian morality is commonly misinterpreted, and regarded in an oversimplified and caricatured manner. As a result of this unfair reading, it is subjected to several criticisms from virtue ethicists. Nevertheless, a deeper analysis of Kantian morality seems to provide a defense against these accusations. Therefore, to evaluate this possibility firstly I give an account of these criticisms under eight categories. Secondly, I examine basic components of Kantian morality. From here I conclude that, it is wrong to think Kantian morality as a stagnant rule-following. Under the light of given arguments; I claim that it is possible to consider ethics of deontology as compatible with authenticity, perfection and constant self-retrospection.

## Tez Özeti

Seniye Tilev, “Erdem Etiđi Zaviyesinden Kantçı Ahlak’ın Analizi”

Bu tezin amacı erdem etiđi zaviyesinden Kantçı Ahlak’ın bir analizini sađlayabilmektir. Kant’ın Ahlak’ı çođunlukla yanlış anlaşılmalıdır ve aşırı basitleştirilmiş, karikatürize bir tutumla ele alınmaktadır. Bu haksız okumanın bir sonucu olarak, erdem etiđi savunucuları tarafından bir çok eleştiriye maruz bırakılmaktadır. Bununla beraber, daha derin bir Kant Ahlakı analizinin bu suçlamalara karşı savunma sađlaması mümkün gözükmemektedir. Bunu olasılığı deđerlendirebilmek için, öncelikle söz konusu eleştiriler sekiz kategori altında ele alınmaktadır. İkinci olarak Kantçı Ahlak’ın temel öğeleri incelenmektedir. Buradan çıkarılan sonuca göre, Kantçı Ahlak’ın ruhsuz, katı bir kural takibi olarak düşünülmesi hatalıdır. Verilen argümanlar ışığında, görev etiđinin kendine özgülük, tekamül ve iç muhabese ile uyumlu bir biçimde ele alınmasının mümkün olduđu iddia edilmektedir.

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And my dear family and friends...even though they are fed up with my never-ending papers, they have always been ready there to help. With their love, prayers and illuminating discussions, life is meaningful; and the journey is bearable.

### What Then?

His chosen comrades thought at school  
He must grow a famous man;  
He thought the same and lived by rule,  
All his twenties crammed with toil;  
*`What then?' sang Plato's ghost. `What then?'*

Everything he wrote was read,  
After certain years he won  
Sufficient money for his need,  
Friends that have been friends indeed;  
*`What then?' sang Plato's ghost. `What then?'*

All his happier dreams came true -  
A small old house, wife, daughter, son,  
Grounds where plum and cabbage grew,  
Poets and Wits about him drew;  
*`What then?' sang Plato's ghost. `What then?'*

*`The work is done,'* grown old he thought,  
*`According to my boyish plan;*  
Let the fools rage, I swerved in naught,  
Something to perfection brought';  
*But louder sang that ghost, `What then?'*

William Butler Yeats

## CONTENTS

### CHAPTER I:

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II: PERSPECTIVES AGAINST KANT.....	14
1. Inertness of Reason.....	16
2. Impartiality.....	27
3. External & Internal Reasons.....	32
4. Unhealthy Dividedness.....	36
5. Lacking Values.....	39
6. Lacking Harmony.....	42
7. Pleasure.....	45
8. Life.....	49
CHAPTER III: KANTIAN ETHICS .....	57
1. Reason as an Active Faculty.....	59
2. Kant as a Possible Virtue Ethicist.....	79
CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION.....	99
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	104

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, Kantian morality will be defended against certain basic accusations of virtue ethicists. I claim that those criticisms are basically grounded on an over-simplified or rather caricaturized reading of Kantian morality. The initial concern of this thesis is to claim that a fair reading of Kant can provide us insights that can help us understand his ethics better and to show that his ethics is not in a necessary opposition to virtue ethics. In this first chapter, I will try to provide a general picture of my work and show how the chapters relate to each other. Firstly, I will give a brief account of the common, over-simplified reading of Kantian morality. Then, I will state how such a picture allows certain criticisms and what could be a possible defense against them. In the second chapter, I will focus on the criticisms in detail. I will analyze them under eight headings, each of which will reflect the thoughts of a different philosopher. In the third chapter, I will provide a closer reading of Kantian morality. I will present central components of Kant's philosophy and suggest how we can find replies to the criticisms of the second chapter. In the conclusion chapter, upon a short evaluation of chapter two and three, I will suggest my own interpretation on the issue.



## Kant's Moral Thought

Before asserting widely held criticisms against Kant, to familiarize ourselves with the subject matter, it is necessary to depict how Kantian morality is commonly understood, or in my eyes misunderstood. According to this common reading, Kant provides us a morality which takes “duty” as its central concept and focuses on actions rather than character. Therefore, his ethics is regarded as deontological. That means, the moral value of actions is defined according to duty. Kant states that, an action can be moral only if it is done from duty.<sup>1</sup> He claims that the right perspective to study morals should be in a scientific manner. What he means by scientific is that, morals must have purely *a priori* first principles like any other sciences. Therefore, his most complete moral work was printed under the title “*Metaphysics of Morals*” in 1797. Nevertheless, to understand his ethics, it is crucial to refer to his previous major works as they allow one to depict the unity of the Kantian system for all sciences. In the year of 1781, when he published his masterpiece, the first critique, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, the book was not a center of attention for the popular reader. It was a disappointment for Kant to see that even the sympathetic reader had found the book difficult to comprehend.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork for the metaphysics of Morals* [electronic resource]; edited and translated by Allen W. Wood. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004. p. xx.

Therefore, two years later he felt the need to publish an overview, in a way a simplified summary of it: *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Come Forward as Science*. In that year, in 1783, Kant wrote to his friend Moses Mendelssohn the following lines regarding his *Critique* : "...although the book is the product of nearly twelve years of reflection, I completed it hastily, in perhaps four or five months, with the greatest attentiveness to its content but less care about its style and ease of comprehension".<sup>3</sup> Kant's aim at his *Critique of Pure Reason* was to examine pure reason, its capacities and sources. He believes that only by examining these capacities and sources can we demonstrate how any kind of cognition is possible. As a result of these discoveries and estimations, we would see how rich and well-equipped reason is even before experience. Accordingly, Kant holds a critical rationalist position which is based on a critique of pure reason. While the critical method secures Kant from dogmatism of classical rationalism, it also allows him to make use of the richness of reason unlike empiricism. Therefore, his special rationalism corresponds to his metaphysics. Scientific metaphysics finds its first principles in reason which enables us to make true judgments about objects of experience. Therefore his initial works focus on the question "What can I know?" Kant suggests that only after we define the limits of our knowledge in general, is it proper to claim knowledge in morals. Therefore, the moral question "what should I do?" comes after the first question. Because of this, the essential claim of his moral works involve references to his other work. In 1785, Kant wrote *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. As the title suggests, the work is meant to be a "foundation" for his moral system. Nevertheless, *Groundwork* has been

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<sup>3</sup> Guyer, Paul. *Kant*. Canada: Routledge, 2006. p.32.

generally regarded as the sole reference to understand Kantian morality. Therefore, the caricatured deontological interpretation of Kant is mainly drawn from the arguments from this first major moral writing.

*Groundwork* has three chapters in which Kant provides the reader a general view of his aim and method in morality. He aims at a metaphysics of morals which would provide a ground for moral obligation with an<sup>4</sup> absolute necessity. To claim absolute necessity, morals must make use of *a priori* concepts of reason like other sciences. As a result, everything based on experience, or sentimental incentives, must be excluded from the first principles of morality. This can provide a science of morals where to talk of universal obligation is possible. Accordingly, “to investigate the idea and principles of a possible pure will, not the actions and conditions of human volition in general”<sup>5</sup> is the central concern of a metaphysics of morals. For Kant, if we can give a universally binding account of “will”, it will be possible to talk of a law-like morality. A “will” which is good in itself, is not good because of what it accomplishes or the ends it provides.<sup>6</sup> Kant claims that only reason, as a practical faculty can produce such a *will good in itself*.<sup>7</sup> Thus, firstly it is required to give the objective principles of such a will. The principles that make a will morally worthy, are imperatives of morality. Accordingly, we get to the concept of “duty” which refers to the actions that are

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<sup>4</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*. p.5.

<sup>5</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*. p.6.

<sup>6</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*. p.10.

<sup>7</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*. p.12.

necessitated by respect for the moral law.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, Kantian morality is generally summarized as acting according to the moral law and in this manner fulfilling your duty. Whatever we do, must be done from duty in order to gain moral worth. As rational beings, human beings must obey the call of duty, even if we have other opposing inclinations. Otherwise we fail to be autonomous moral agents. If we let empirical, feeling based incentives or anticipated ends, to be involved in the determining ground of our will; our actions lose their moral worth. As we are simply supposed to fulfill our duties, we must avoid heteronomy which implies the involvement of self-interest or other external incentives in the “will”. As we are imperfect beings, i.e. our wills always may relate to several subjective motivations of us; but for our actions to be moral there must be an objective ground of *good will*. Once will is necessitated on an objective ground, it is not determined solely by hypothetical imperatives. In other words, will is not grounded on some contingencies, for the sake of some possible or actual consequences. When will is determined by the categorical imperative, it in itself accords with reason and the maxims (which are the subjective principles of action) of the will gain objective necessity and apodictic validity.<sup>9</sup> This completely *a priori* categorical imperative corresponds to the unconditional demand of morality. That unconditional moral imperative simply involves the form, which our maxims are supposed to fit in. Thus, Kant states that there is only one single categorical imperative: “Act in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it

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<sup>8</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*. p.16.

<sup>9</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*. p.31.

becomes a universal law”.<sup>10</sup> Kant suggests that it is possible to “derive all imperatives of duty from that single formula as from their principle”.<sup>11</sup> This formula, which holds the central ground for moral worth, is usually referred to as “formula of universalizability”.

When we consider Kantian morality in an over-simplifying manner, we take it simply to suggest us acting only from duty, which is commanded by reason, i.e. by the categorical imperative. Upon that ground, very often Kant has been considered to affirm any action that can fit universalizability formula. There appear also several other deficiencies if we adopt such a narrow perspective on Kant’s ethical thought. Now, I will briefly provide a catalogue of eight views which either substantially disagree with Kantian morality or were born as a result of the unfair reading of it. In the second chapter, they will be analyzed in detail. Nevertheless I have to admit that as each of these eight criticisms actually may require an independent study on its own, I could only provide a sketch of each. I preferred to suggest such a diversity of criticisms on purpose, instead of dealing with only one criticism in its full sense. My aim was to involve distinct aspects of ethical life as many as possible. Each criticism in this study is included to reflect one aspect of morality. Even if sometimes the criticisms may sound like repeating a very similar perspective, or even if they actually raise from similar arguments; the headings they are given under, emphasize their specific function with respect to moral assessment.

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<sup>10</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*. p.37.

<sup>11</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*. p.37.

Firstly, I will start with a substantial objection to Kantian morality with respect to Kant's understanding reason. Here the objection is that "reason is an inert faculty" and it can have no practical use. I will give an account of Hume's philosophy to analyze this criticism. Hume claims that reason has no *a priori* richness, so we can refer to any constructive principle neither in its theoretical use nor in practical sphere. For instance, we have no *a priori* ground to talk about causal necessity between consecutive events. Likewise, Hume claims we cannot talk of moral truths or falsehood according to certain judgments of reason. It is through our sentimentality that we can assess moral value of human actions. In this section, I will examine Hume's basic assumptions about reason, human nature and virtues. I will try to show that his initial assumptions deny the practical aspect of reason and necessitates a moral sentimentalism. The second chapter, the section "Reason as an Active Faculty" will provide an answer to Hume's position. This section will give an account of the Kantian conception of reason which is active and has an *a priori* competent in both its theoretical and practical uses. I will suggest that for Kant, (1) human beings are essentially reasonable beings and (2) reason is essentially active. The fact that we are essentially reasoning beings will be important for my responses to some of the other objections to Kantian ethics I will examine, which often think of reason as some forces external to our nature. Furthermore I will underline that our rationality necessitates us to be moral, i.e. autonomous and free. Accordingly, reason does not simply have an influence on the will, in fact as its true vocation, reason is the faculty that can produce a will good in itself.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*. p.12.

Secondly, I will analyze the “impartiality” objection. This objection suggests that the categorical imperative, because of its universality and objectivity claims, requires us to act from an impartial point of view, and this is damaging to valuable interpersonal relationships. Thus, Bernard Williams claims that Kantian ethics, as it is grounded on the concept of duty, impairs interpersonal relations. While Williams may attribute a certain practical capacity to reason, for him in some sense it would be inhumane to prioritize universalizability over our immediate affections and incentives. Nevertheless, as I will suggest in the second chapter, acting from duty does not necessarily suggest us to adopt an impartial point of view in our conduct. We have duties to promote the happiness of others, yet those are “imperfect duties” and their content is not given. We do also have perfect duties towards others. For example not making lying promises to them, or respecting their property etc. Which means that, our subjective priorities can righteously be involved in fulfillment of our imperfect duties. Thus, from the Kantian perspective, there is nothing necessarily wrong with saving your husband’s life because you love him rather than someone else.

Thirdly, I will introduce “internal and external reasons” criticism. This criticism suggests that deontological ethics is based on objective obligations which cannot provide motivation to act or allow for actualization of the self. Again Williams suggests that categorical imperative is an abstract command of a universal rationality which fails to provide immediate motivation (or reason) to act for the agent. Also, Hegel holds a similar criticism against Kant in based upon his distinction between the “abstract” and “concrete”. Analyzing Hegel’s notion of freedom and duty, I will show that Hegel accuses Kant of introducing these term purely in an abstract sense which may imply

externality. To answer these accusations, in the second chapter I will first suggest that moral law is not an external command for the agent as it necessitates itself immediately while we are acting. Therefore, moral command actually is an internal ground to act. Accordingly, moral command provides us with the form of duty, i.e. formal, *a priori* grounds of our actions. There are only limited cases where we are also given the matter (content) of our actions. As a result, as free rational agents we reflect upon our grounds of acting, and make concrete choices. That is, it would be absurd to demand from a universal law of morals to specify us what to do concretely in each and every case, with respect to actual conditions. Therefore, it seems possible to free Kant from Hegel's criticism of abstraction.

The fourth criticism is provided by Micheal Stocker. He claims that once we favor our rationality over our more vivid and substantial faculty; namely our feelings, that would cause a moral schizophrenia. This inner conflict is based on the assumption that according to Kant only acting from duty is moral, and duty excludes any incentives other than the law itself. Nevertheless, this seems to be an inadequate interpretation of Kant. Kant suggests that there are certain actions which are in conformity with duty and we have "immediate inclinations" towards them.<sup>13</sup> Those immediate inclinations of us (such as caring for our own lives or actions out of sympathy for the ones we love) necessitate themselves on naturally on us, without projecting any other further ends. Because of their immediateness, we do not even reflect upon our maxims and simply act in a way which is already obliged by law. Accordingly, Kant affirms that as an outcome of our natural construction, we cannot be asked to act impartially. Therefore,

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<sup>13</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*. p.13.



acting from duty does not necessitate to be impartial or acting without inclination. In claiming that we should not act from inclination, Kant is not claiming that it is wrong to act with inclination, or in accordance with our inclinations. As a result, Kantian agent cannot be accused of schizophrenia which always implies a necessary incompatibility between inclinations and duty.

The fifth criticism is given under “Lacking Values”. Alasdair MacIntyre suggests that, Kantian ethics only requires the empty universalizability condition to attribute moral legitimacy to our actions. Nevertheless, MacIntyre claims that without values and certain positive qualities of character, universalizability does not guarantee “good actions”. It only provides legitimacy for any anticipated actions. Again in the second chapter, I shall suggest that, this is a very unfair reading of Kant. This is because, first of all duty by its definition already involves goodness hand in hand with righteousness. Besides, we have several duties of virtues, which embrace values. Moreover, we have a specific duty to be virtuous, which is a prevalent duty as an underlying principle of all duties.<sup>14</sup>

The sixth criticism focuses on the notion of harmony. It is suggested that the distinction between two realms, namely that between our empirical and noumenal self, with the suggestion that our empirical self should be subordinated to our noumenal self results in a lack of harmony for the moral agent, and the social world. Schiller claims that our rationality should not treat our empirical aspects imperatively, but rather that a transformative power should be attributed to it. I suspect that Kantian system lacks

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<sup>14</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *The Metaphysics of Morals*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.p.188-189.

harmony in social, intra-personal, inter personal relations and with respect to jurisprudence. Once if we regard duty as something necessitated for us by ourselves, without an obligatory combat; we can think of a more and more harmonious moral agent who gets closer to “willing perfectly”. Duties are not in a necessary opposition to our nature. This is because, while the moral law has its *a priori* ground in reason, it consults our empirical nature in application.

The seventh notion to be analyzed is the Aristotelian conceptualization of pleasure. Aristotle claims that virtuous people necessarily get pleasure out of virtuous actions. His specific account of happiness underlies this necessitation. In contrast, Kant claims that if we take happiness or “choosing the mean principle” as determining ground of our actions, this will again result in heteronomy. It should be our “maxims” that define the moral worth of our actions. In the second chapter, I will suggest that on the one hand, it is possible to think of a negotiation between the two philosophers with respect to their foundations of morals; i.e. acting on a rational principle. On the other hand, there is still a tension between Aristotle and Kant with respect to their approach about the relation between our rationality and sensibility. That is, while Kant necessitates that reason must suppress our sensible incentives, if they are to oppose moral law; for Aristotle virtue or moral excellence in its ancient use, instantly requires an ultimate completeness (i.e. eudemonia which refers to happiness, harmony and excellence all together at once).

The final criticism I shall state; “Life”, is a total rejection against morality rather than a criticism addressed specifically to Kant. I will try give an account of Nietzsche’s analysis of history of morals briefly. Through investigating his terms “slave revolt” and

“freedom”; I want to assert how Nietzsche regards morality and moral values as artificial and constructed notions. He claims that values are historical, as they emerge and gain authority as a result of clashing powers in the course of the time. Therefore, he concludes that the very idea of a rational self, and the responsibility that we shall attribute her to control her desires; is nothing but a refusal of life. While we instinctually carry a will to power; morals commands us to give up that power and advises not to actualize our desires. Actually, it seems obvious that Kant’s and Nietzsche’s perspectives are ultimately incompatible, so it would be futile to seek answers within Kant for Nietzsche. Nevertheless, I thought involving such an extremely opposite view shall contribute to the diversity I tried to provide in the course of this work. I will suggest that our premises with respect to a certain human nature, plays the definitive role in the moral theories or “anti-theories” we favor. Upon observing practical and commonsensical validity of Kantian morality, Nietzsche’s revolt against moral obligations can serve a very limited critical insight; but fails to convince us abandoning Kantian merits.

The organization of the second chapter will follow a Kant oriented flow rather than providing answers one by one to the criticisms in the order they are given in first chapter. This method seemed much more useful to provide a unified work and to avoid frequent repetitions. Therefore, I will have two sections in the second chapter. In the first section of this chapter, I will focus on illustrating how reason is an active faculty for Kant. In both its theoretical and practical uses, reason can provide us *a priori* principles according to Kant. Correspondingly, reason has a capacity to determine the will and we are also equipped with “moral respect” which serves as an incentive to obey

law of freedom. In this section, initially I will reply to Humean take of morality. In addition, I will defend the validity of moral law with respect to “Internal & External Reasons” criticism. In the second section, “Kant as a Possible Virtue Ethicist”, I will provide a closer analysis of Kantian ethics that refutes the caricatured popular reading. I will have four subsections in which I discuss one aspect of Kant’s moral thought. Nevertheless, each subsection provides answer to either only one criticism, or it relates to more than one criticism at the same time. Firstly, I will depict the Kantian morality as a “Commonsensible Practical Philosophy”. Here once again, I will emphasize that moral law is commonsensically embedded in us. Secondly, I will explicate the notion of “Duty”. I shall suggest that a proper understanding of duty can save Kantian ethics from the accusations of impartiality, disharmony, dividedness and externality (abstraction). Thirdly, I will focus on “Virtue” in Kantian terminology. This will allow us to see how qualities such as; virtues and character development are involved in Kant, yet in an original sense. That is, Kantian morality does not simply ask for self-control, and for moral development it demands us to care for the well-being of others and ourselves. In this picture, not only moral values are embraced, but also happiness of the agent is not thrown away from the set of moral concerns. That is, finally I will give an account of “Happiness” in Kantian ethics. Therefore, taking all of these into consideration, it seems legitimate to think “Kant as a Possible Virtue Ethicist”.

In the conclusion chapter, I will briefly underline my initial motivations and subsequent interpretations. Besides, I expect to provide my personal reflection regarding the overall discussion.

## CHAPTER 2

### PERSPECTIVES AGAINST KANT

To be able to provide a sound analysis of Kantian ethics in comparison to virtue ethics; first of all we need to position Kant in the general debate in the history of moral thought regarding the foundation of ethics. This debate reveals as a bifurcation in moral philosophy; namely as a clash in between moral rationalism and moral sentimentalism. Though David Hume contributed a lot to Kant's critical philosophy via awakening him from his "dogmatic sleep", it is apparent that there is an obvious incompatibility between their moral thoughts. Hume, known as one of the key figures of British empiricism and pioneers of the Scottish Enlightenment advocated a certain type of sentiments-based moral thought in his philosophy. He compiled his two major philosophical writings; *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) and *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* (1748), roughly forty years before Kant's major works. In the following section firstly I will try to give a brief account of basic arguments of Hume's moral thought under three categories. It is important to underline that Hume regards reason as an inert faculty both theoretically and practically. While the major disagreement between Hume and Kant is that Hume rejects the practical aspect of reason all together, other criticisms gather around the claim of inhumanity of moral

rationalism. Some of those criticisms assert that even if we could be claimed of discovering some true moral judgments, that discovery would not be sufficient to provide a motivation to act upon them. Some others claim that acting upon certain imperatives would hurt either the agent herself or her interpersonal relations. Though Hume precedes Kant chronologically, his central claims have been used widely in criticizing Kant up to now. Therefore starting the debate from this point could provide us a ground to evaluate more recent critics better, who follow a relatively similar line of thought in their objections to Kant.

## 1. Inertness of Reason

Although it would not provide a comprehensive depiction of Hume's moral thought, in the limited scope of this chapter I will point three central claims making up Humean ethics. Nevertheless, while evaluating Hume's practical philosophy it is also obligatory to refer to his theoretical philosophy. This is because Hume regards reason as an inert faculty, and this cancels him to attribute any practical use to it. Hume claims that reason is bound by experience, and it can have no mental content that is not analyzable via tracing back to perception.

I prefer to summarize Hume's moral thought particularly under these three basic claims, as these can depict for us a clear opposition to the Kantian moral system. In this context, the most distinguishing characteristic of Hume's moral thought is that he considers reason an inert faculty. That is, first of all Hume regards reason as an instrument which is and should only be a slave to our passions while we are acting. Secondly, Hume suggests that a certain understanding of virtues (natural and artificial) constitute the criteria for moral value of our actions. Finally, Hume claims that we cannot talk of certain moral truths and falsehoods in a rationalistic sense, in contrast to the general claim of moral rationalism.

In Book III of the *Treatise*<sup>15</sup>, Hume explicates the relation between passions and reason. He starts with refuting the widely accepted dichotomy between the two; which describes reason as pre-eminent, eternal, invariable and divine, and passions as blind, inconstant and deceitful. He suggests that this presupposition leads to a great error in

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<sup>15</sup> Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*, London: Penguin Books, 1969.

moral philosophy.<sup>16</sup> This line of thought attributes reason a dominance over passions and demands us to act reasonably to be moral. On the contrary, Hume suggests that “Reason is, and ought only to be a slave of the passions”.<sup>17</sup> His analysis of human understanding brings him to this conclusion. According to Hume, human experience starts with perception and our perceptions give rise to impressions in our minds. Correspondingly, our ideas are copied images of our impressions. That is; the only two contents of mind; impressions and ideas are acquired by perception. Our sensations, emotions and passions make the lively and forceful continuations of our perception under the title impressions. Nevertheless “faint images of these in thinking”<sup>18</sup> form our ideas. Hume suggests; with respect to their liveliness the distinction between thinking and feeling is so clear that for nobody in her right mind does it demands any more clarification.

In our understanding ideas are associated and connected to each other according to certain qualities.<sup>19</sup> As a result, our understanding has two sorts of objects; relation of ideas and matters of facts.<sup>20</sup> Reason has a demonstrative function in terms of relation of ideas. In this field we are capable of composing *a priori* and indestructible connections between our ideas. This realm includes demonstrative sciences such as arithmetic, algebra and geometry. We cannot deny any proposition of demonstratively concluded reasoning as it would cause a contradiction. That kind of proposition in the

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<sup>16</sup> Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 507.

<sup>17</sup> Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 462

<sup>18</sup> Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 49.

<sup>19</sup> Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 59.

<sup>20</sup> Hume, David. *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 28.



understanding is held without any dependence on physical reality, but they are simply discoverable through the operations of thought between the ideas. Hume suggests that second object of our reasoning, i.e. matters of fact, relate to the second functional capacity of our reason which is cause & effect reasoning. Unlike demonstrative reasoning, this capacity of human understanding does not provide *a priori* certainty in its propositions and is totally dependent on experience. Namely, reason thinks of certain causal relations between consecutive events. Once we observe any event “A” that is followed by event “B”, we are inclined to attribute a casual relation between the two. Nevertheless, Hume argues that we have no ground to claim a causal necessity about this repeated consecutive relations between the events. Hume’s great contribution to question the ground of causal necessity is not within the main scope of this paper. What is important here is to underline that according to Hume in matters of fact reason deals with cause and effect relations and it carries a probabilistic occupation. In short, Hume attributes two basic functions or capacity to reason; demonstrative and probabilistic reasoning. In these functions reason does not appear as a constitutive synthesizer. Reason owns some principles such as associating and copying, yet even those principles are grounded on experience. In this respect, theoretical account of reason does not involve an active foundation prior to experience.

He concludes that neither demonstrative nor probabilistic functions of reason has an initially practical aspect that can trigger an action. Those operations of reason simply relate to certain connections and calculations between ideas and has nothing to do with motivation to act. In that sense, in Hume’s thought reason has no practical aspect. In other words, reason cannot desire, demand or produce volition towards any

sort of action. We act in accordance to our passions and it is our sentiments which give rise to our actions. Therefore morality, which has human action as its subject matter, should not be thought as a discipline derived from reason. The very distinction of speculative and practical reason creates the false conviction that understanding can “go beyond the calm and indolent judgments” of it and influence our passions and actions.

As long as it is allow'd, that reason has no influence on our passions and actions, 'tis in vain to pretend, that morality is discover'd only by a deduction of reason. An active principle can never be founded on an inactive; and if reason be inactive in itself, it must remain so in all its shapes and appearances, whether it exerts itself in natural or moral subjects, whether it considers the power of external bodies, or the actions of rational beings.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, reason is an inert faculty and it can neither provide a motivation to act nor disquiet a passion which is directed to a certain act<sup>22</sup>. Even reason's probabilistic capacity which provides the projection of cause and effect relations within phenomena could have only an instrumental involvement in our actions. That is, once we are already driven to act in a certain way through our sentiments, reason can calculate the right means to reach our desired ends.<sup>23</sup> To conclude, neither demonstrative reasoning nor probabilistic reasoning can give rise directly to an action towards which we feel disinterested. Reason has no practical aspect as it can never be a motive to any action of the will; and it can never oppose passions which are original existences.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 509.

<sup>22</sup> Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 460.

<sup>23</sup> Actually Hume affirms that reason can have influence on our conduct after two ways: “Either when it excites a passion by informing us of the existence of something which is a proper object of it; or when it discovers the connexion of causes and effects, so as to afford us means of exerting any passion” (*A Treatise*, p. 511).

<sup>24</sup> Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 460-462.

Hume repeatedly underlines that through our direct experience of certain pleasure, or aversion from some sort of pain, we incline to or decline from acting. That is; we are driven to act through our sentiments according to Hume. As mentioned above Hume categorizes all perceptions in the mind into two categories: impressions and ideas. Correspondingly, Hume claims that mind can have no action which cannot be comprehended under the term of perception.<sup>25</sup> He later categorizes impressions into two; *original* and *secondary impressions*.<sup>26</sup> *Original* impressions arise from senses, from our bodily interaction with the world. Those include all bodily pains and pleasures which are simply related to five senses. The latter type of impressions, mentioned as *secondary*, either arise from original impressions immediately or from stored/ copied versions of them in our minds, i.e. from ideas. Hume also names these secondary impressions as impressions of reflection. Those secondary impressions involve passions, emotions and desires. To clarify the terminology; we can think of ice cream. When we eat ice-cream; we perceive an “original” existence on our tongue. This original existence, namely the taste of the ice cream, is an original impression. What reflects from this perception on our mind is the “secondary” impression, namely the taste of the ice cream in our understanding faculties. We can have this secondary impression of an ice-cream either while we are eating one, or we are happily thinking of the one we ate in Maraş last year. Subsequently, Hume divides passions –which is a subcategory of secondary impressions- also into direct and indirect ones. Direct passions proceed immediately from pain or pleasure (that Hume identifies as good and

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<sup>25</sup> Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 508.

<sup>26</sup> Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 327.

evil). Hope, fear, desire, aversion and grief are direct passions that relates either to pleasure or pain. On the other hand, indirect passions also arise from the same principles; i.e. from pain and pleasure, but they intermingle also with some other qualities. Pride, humility, love and hatred are indirect passions. These passions involve as associating principles unlike direct passions. My pleasure of eating an ice cream simply corresponds to a direct passion. Nevertheless, if it were possible to talk of “pride” with respect to eating an ice cream; that “indirect passion” would suggest associating this action with some sort of skills, or with appreciation of others. In short Hume suggests that we can be motivated by “direct passions” or through “indirect passions”, yet in either case our sentimentality is the locus of our willing capacity<sup>27, 28</sup>.

Given Humean terminology, the second aspect to be explicated in Hume’s moral philosophy is his understanding of virtues. To depict Hume’s ethical picture clearly; we first gave an account of mind’s contents. After seeing the status of passions in this picture, now we can analyze the way Hume regards virtues. This is because Hume suggest a passage from passions to virtues. In the *Book III of Morals*, he starts the discussion on virtue and vices with the following lines:

Now as perceptions resolve themselves into two kinds, viz. impressions and ideas, this distinction gives rise to a question, with which we shall open up our present enquiry concerning morals. Whether ‘tis by means of our ideas or impressions we distinguish betwixt vice and virtue, and pronounce an action blamable or praiseworthy? This will immediately cut off all loose discourses and

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<sup>27</sup> Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 485.

<sup>28</sup> Actually, Hume’s conceptualization of “will” is rather ambiguous. He prefers a midway between liberty and necessity and defines will as “the internal impression we feel and are conscious of, when we knowingly give rise to any new motion of our body, or new perception of our mind”. (Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 447.) He seems to regard “will” not as a distinct faculty; but rather as a continuation of our other sentiments.

declamations, and reduce us to something precise and exact on the present subject.<sup>29</sup>

Hume suggests that as morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions, they could only be related to our vivid impressions. Accordingly it would be to miscategorize thinking of virtue and vice under the deductions of reason. Reason has the power to discover truth and falsehood. Nevertheless truth and falsehood is only applicable either to relation of ideas or to matters of facts. In contrast, the moral value of our actions, our approval or disapproval of certain actions, do not fall into any of these two categories. Hume claims that, as we act upon our sentiments, it must be again our sentimental faculty as the proper place to discuss moral virtues. Our passions, volitions and actions cannot be objects of truth or falsehood. It can be legitimate to discuss whether an action is laudable or blameable, but it would be erroneous to talk of it reasonableness or unreasonableness.<sup>30</sup>

Where a passion is neither founded on false suppositions, nor chuses means insufficient for the end, the understanding can neither justify nor condemn it. 'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger. 'Tis not contrary to reason for me to chuse my total ruin, to prevent the least uneasiness of an Indian or a person wholly unknown to me.<sup>31</sup>

Hume does not suggest that it can be virtuous to prefer world's destruction instead of the little uneasiness of his finger. Nevertheless any truth or falsehood defined by reason cannot be applied to that absurd preference of his. We may readily see its absurdity, and we may all disapprove it. According to Hume this disapproval arises from our

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 508.

<sup>30</sup> Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 510.

<sup>31</sup> Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 463.

sensibility, not from our reason. “Sense of morals” which we can consider as a certain type of taste, makes us “feel” the moral worth of actions. Hume gives the example of “willful murder”. When we analyze such a case; what makes us consider it vice, is the “reflection of it into our own breast” and “the sentiment of disapprobation which arises in” us. This feeling does not lie in the fact, or the action; but it lies in us as either the direct observer or contemplator of such a case.

So that when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it. Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compar'd to sounds, colours, heat and cold, which, according to modern philosophy, are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind.<sup>32</sup>

Hume concludes that nothing can be more real or concern us more than our own sentiments of pleasure and uneasiness. As a result, “in regulation of our conduct or behavior” only these can have a factuality or practical value. Accordingly, moving from this factual situation, namely “is”; moral systems get to the conclusion of “ought”. Hume suggests that no legitimate ground can be found for this shift and deduction of moral necessities.

As the quotation above points, according to Hume human beings have a certain “nature” which equips them with moral sentimentality. Only on the basis of this human nature and sentimentality, it is possible to talk of feeling virtues. Hume sets forth that we have some purely natural virtues along with the artificial virtues. Natural virtues and vices are natural dispositions (feeling of pleasure or pain) toward certain traits. Without any reference to society or social interaction we possess those virtues instinctually simply out of recognition of our own happiness. Traits such as benevolence, a hearty

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 520.

pride, or self-esteem, generosity, gratitude, friendship, and “such natural abilities as prudence and wit” excite immediate approval or pleasure by the person who possess them or who project herself to be treated in these manners.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, artificial virtues have their “dominion over the breasts of men” through order of society, the happiness of mankind, the harmony of families, the mutual support of friends.<sup>34</sup> These artificial virtues are not the forces of nature within us, but they were born because of their utility for the society and their usefulness in mutual conducts.<sup>35</sup> Afterwards we are thought and educated in a way to promote these artificial virtues as everything which contributes to the happiness of the society recommends itself directly to us.<sup>36</sup> Hume regards justice as the paradigm artificial virtue which covers others such as respect for the property rights, laws of nations and obedience governmental authority. In short, Hume suggest that the general hypothesis that: “Every quality of the mind is denominated virtuous, which gives pleasure by the mere survey; as every quality, which produces pain, is called vicious”.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, virtues are more than this direct awareness of our own pleasure or contentment, otherwise they would be equal to passions. Virtues are particular senses with respect to morals. Therefore virtues are about the way we assess human actions in general, not only ours. In some sense, virtues are beyond our particular self-interests as they imply a commonsensical perspective.

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<sup>33</sup> Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 625-660.

<sup>34</sup> Hume, David. *Hume's Ethical Writings*; edited, with an introduction by Alasdair MacIntyre. New York: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979. p.34.  
(The referred section is from *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Section II, Part II, ‘Of Benevolence’ )

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>37</sup> Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 641.

Hume seems to regard human beings as mildly selfish social beings. While personal interest of each individual (one's peculiar concern in acquiring pleasure or avoiding pain) makes the core of her moral sentimentality; she is also furnished with the natural force of "*sympathy*".<sup>38</sup> All human beings are similar in their bodily constructions, in their feelings and operations of the mind. Therefore we are capable of comprehending pain and pleasures of other "human creatures". Furthermore, this is not a dormant comprehension but a vivid empathy which also give rises to passions in us. As a result, we can have pleasure by spectating the pleasures of any other human being who is a total stranger to us. In the same way, the pain of others displeases us via the *principle of sympathy*.<sup>39</sup> Sympathy provides us to make a comparison between ourselves and the observed agents from an unbiased point of view.

We are certain that, sympathy is a very powerful principle in human nature. We are also certain, that it has a great influence on our sense of beauty, when we regard external objects, as well as when we judge of morals. We find, that it has force sufficient to give us the strongest sentiments of approbation, when it operates alone, without the concurrence of any other principle; as in the case of justice, allegiance, chastity, and good-manners. We may observe, that all the circumstances requisite for its operation found in most of the virtues; which have, for the most part a tendency to the good of the society, or to that of the person possessed of them. If we compare all these circumstances, we shall not doubt, that sympathy is the chief source of moral distinctions; ...<sup>40</sup>

Seemingly, sympathy is a sentimental control mechanism, over our own feelings. As Hume has cancelled the control of reason over our passions, the only force which stands above our "self-centered" passions, is the principle of sympathy. Without the notion of sympathy, which enables us to regard actions from an impartial observer's view, it

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<sup>38</sup> Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 626.

<sup>39</sup> Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 641.

<sup>40</sup> Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 667- 668.



would be impossible to expect certain virtues' survival. In particular, for the survival and circulation of all artificial virtues a principle like sympathy is necessitated.

To summarize this section on Hume, it is important to underline these issues once again. Hume claims that reason is an inert faculty both theoretically and practically. Accordingly it can have no authority in morals. Reason can only be an instrument, a complementary tool of acting. Moral values are simply derived from our perceptions, i.e. experiences. This suggests that all experience-based values are hypothetical and never claims *a priori* necessity. What we regard as moral value does not lie in principles, and it is not readily attributed to actions under certain categories. That is to say, it is impossible to talk of something essentially good or bad without any experience of it. We are given a moral sense by nature, which provides us to react in certain ways to certain actions. Even our self-esteem is shaped by this given nature that we tend to appreciate ourselves when we act virtuously. That is, benevolence is naturally pleasurable for us and we are content with ourselves if we act benevolently. Besides we can only think of a species-based “pseudo-universalizability” for moral values which humans share through “sympathy”. As a result, morality owns only a loose and relative enforcement on human behaviors. Actually, in this picture morality seems to be reduced to a certain type of natural ability where we can expect people to have proper sentiments at best. Alternatively, if we prefer to emphasize the option that contemplation can also evoke pain or pleasure<sup>41</sup>; then the inertness of the reason argument seems to be weakened.

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<sup>41</sup> Hume mentions this from time to time between the lines; does not give it as a specific argument. See. Hume, *A Treatise*, p. 347.

## 2. Impartiality

Impossible impartiality is a central accusation that is addressed to Kant. The Kantian demand to act as a rational member of an intelligible realm, necessitates the agent to own an impartial point of view. Bernard Williams suggests that such a demand is inhumane, as it is opposite to the complexity of human nature. Also the impartiality demand contradicts the essence of ethics which is all about people and their actions rather than calculations and formulations regarding the actions. In his book *Ethics and Limits of Philosophy*<sup>42</sup> Williams provides a conception of morality which is related to the conditions and regulations outside the agent. Nevertheless, according to him ethics is considered not through obligations but along with perspectives towards the self or the other. Williams explains morality as a particular style of ethical thought which finds its definition through obligation at best. He takes it as a subdivision of ethics that is made of certain presuppositions leading the agent to agree with a set of certain norms.<sup>43</sup> Obviously such a conception of morality aims at a unity in the answers to the moral questions. To put in Williams's words, moral theories needs an "Archimedean Point" for both to justify their ethical judgments and to convince the amoral people heeding the sound of morality.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, ethics in its ancient conception does not necessarily deal with judgments. Williams points the Socratic question of "How should one live?" in order to depict that. Though not being an ardent supporter of any ancient

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<sup>42</sup>Williams, Bernard. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2006.

<sup>43</sup> Williams, *Ethics*, p.6.

<sup>44</sup> Williams, *Ethics*, p.23.

Greek philosophers, Williams marks the great shift in the evolution of this question in the history of Western thought and the negative effects of this shift in our reasoning. To summarize, he asserts that instead of questioning the right life for “any one”, in the process of time the question starts to be formulated as “what should I do?”, “what is my duty?” or “what is good for me?”. Then he relates these questions not with ethics but with morality. According to Williams, each of these formulations involves a notion of righteousness, which implies an obligation indirectly though. Therefore it is implied that the categorical imperative which is founded in pure reason provides the Archimedean Point for Kant. Williams claims that this lifeless obligation fails to provide a ground for ethics, accordingly it suggests no reason to be moral<sup>45</sup>. In this picture the rational agent enters into the world of ethics through the prescription of “ought” which she is claimed to find within herself. While she is being the very legislator of this obligation (i.e. Categorical Imperative), being a member of a moral realm necessitates her to obey that law of freedom. Nevertheless Williams seems to be uneasy initially with the acceptance of such a picture in which the moral agents are reduced into abstract citizens without any individuating specifications of desires, powers or positions.<sup>46</sup> This could only depict an equation between rationality and morality which does not allow any motivation for moral development for those who are not already equipped with such an impartial and abstract moral position. Moreover, this impartial standpoint creates a gap between rational agency and her personal satisfactions, aims or any other personal commitments. At this point according to

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<sup>45</sup> Williams, *Ethics*, p.p. 54-56.

<sup>46</sup> Williams, *Ethics*, p.p. 63-67.

Williams, the real problem is that there is no impelling power to prefer acting upon the former rather than the latter.<sup>47</sup> Correspondingly, another initial objection of Williams to the modern moral philosophy is that the diverse ethical sphere is being reduced into systems which do not allow plurality and authenticity. Morality, as Williams claims, which is a natural part of the outlook of almost all of us, turns into a sort of invented obligation in moral systems; in which general legislations are sanctified to particular obligations.<sup>48</sup>

In his essay *Persons, character and morality*<sup>49</sup>, Williams develops further his criticism of this impossible impartiality focusing more on the motivation problem. He puts forward the idea that Kantian morality gives rise to a bifurcated agency, in which whatever sensuous or emotional necessarily conflicts with the rational. In that specific conception of the individual, the ultimate demand for an impartial stance in any given case cancels the character of the individual.<sup>50</sup> Abstracting one from her unique character means to seclude her from all distinguishing qualities, such as one's projects in life, desires and inter-personal relations. Notwithstanding that, in everyday life we, human beings, cannot act upon such a dividedness. This is because Williams claims; firstly it is impossible to go through a rational calculation and get to "the original position" of pure abstraction before acting. Secondly; even if such a rational effort were successful, it would fail to supersede our desiderative faculties and would fail to catalyze an action. In short; the ahistoric, universal and lifeless eye of the impartial gazer does not help

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<sup>47</sup> Williams, *Ethics*, p.70.

<sup>48</sup> Williams, *Ethics*, p.p. 94-95.

<sup>49</sup> Williams, Bernard. *Moral Luck*. UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981. p.2.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

when the person is in a concrete conflict. Alternatively such a sterilized impartiality fails to embrace life in its totality. For instance, love, as an excessive state, most of the time may lead people to act less prudently or rationally. Nevertheless, from an impartial perspective even such a special feeling or attachment has no exceptional status. It also must be evaluated within the discussion of moral and personal relations.

Using the notorious example of drowning of a beloved one, Williams illustrates a conflict where the moral agent needs to take an urgent action. Is it legitimate to save your wife's life while there are others also at peril? Does the impartial stance allow one to act upon the priorities of personal ties? Seemingly this very question is problematic or even pathologic according to Williams.<sup>51</sup> Given that it can be legitimized to choose saving your wife's life according to a universalizability principle does not resolve the problem. The undeniable existence of such deep attachments in life, by definition, destroys the practicality or possibility of an impartial perspective.

The Kantian emphasis on moral impartiality exaggerates it in quite another, by providing ultimately too slim a sense in which any projects are mine at all. This point once more involves the idea that my present projects are the condition of my existence, in the sense that unless I am propelled forward by the conatus of desire, project and interest, it is unclear why I should go on at all: the world, certainly, as a kingdom of moral agents, has no particular claim on my presence or, indeed, interest in it.<sup>52</sup>

Bestowing a supreme importance to such an impartial perspective, even as a theoretical device, is not a simple misevaluation but it is distortive regarding the meaning of life. In such a misrepresentation of agency, all the value of regarding someone or something more precious than all else would be lost. And this loss carries away the moments of retrospection in which we build a character for us and develop a notion of individuality.

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<sup>51</sup> Williams, *Moral Luck*, p. 17-19.

<sup>52</sup> Williams, *Moral Luck*, p. 12.

Without envisaging such authenticity, there would be no meaningful talk of ethics. As a result, trying to push the individual to act regardless of all her personal attachments and relations would overlook the interpersonal sphere of relations.

### 3. External & Internal Reasons

Externality and internality is another key distinction to evaluate ethical theories. By a very rough definition, internality corresponds to everything which relates to concrete individual; whereas externality implies a relation to what is universal and theoretical.

Bernard Williams provides us a distinction of external and internal reasons. He introduces these terms to discuss the difference between two types of reasons to act, however he ends up with the impossibility of any external reason that can motivate one to act. By internal reason Williams suggests that an agent “A” has a personal interest, authentic desire to do any action “x”, which would provide her some sort of satisfaction.<sup>53</sup> He claims that being totally disinterested to x; it would be impossible to think of A to commit x. Williams suggests that thinking of a moral necessity is a process much more complicated than simply applying a rational moral ought to the agent. The discovery of what must be done in a given case always involves a discovery of oneself and her capacities and incapacities. Following that, a disinterested ought would fail to provide a practical necessity for the agent.

The recognition of practical necessity must involve an understanding at once of one’s own powers and incapacities, and of what the world permits, and the recognition of a limit which is neither simply external to the self, nor yet a product of the will, is what can lend a special authority or dignity to such decisions –something that can be heard in Luther’s famous saying, for instance, but also, from a world far removed from what Luther, Kant, or we, might call ‘duty’, in the words of Ajax before his suicide: ‘now I am going where my way must go’.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Williams, *Moral Luck*, p. 101.

<sup>54</sup> Williams, *Moral Luck*, p. 130 & 131

That is, the universal theoretical principle which claims to embrace all individuals in every single case, actually fails to fulfill this claim. This is because the authentic qualities of each individual can never have full correspondence in the abstract externality of theory. The over- simplified sketchy character of theories, makes it impossible to respond particular situations. Even though Williams is a harsh opponent of utilitarian moral thought<sup>55</sup>, he believes that Hume is much more efficient to ground moral demands in comparison to Kant with this respect.<sup>56</sup> According to him, the notion of “sympathy” allows the agent to care for others without cancelling her own personal interests. Furthermore, even though Williams accuses Hume of developing a “mechanical psychology”; sympathy functions as an extension of our own individual sentiments. Therefore Williams does not regard the Humean stand as a reference to external abstraction in comparison to Kant.

Under the externality and internality distinction, it would be useful to refer to Hegel as well, since this distinction resembles to Hegelian “abstract and concrete” distinction. Hegel suggests that it would be erroneous to cancel concrete individuality with respect to an abstract theorization. Hegel’s criticism can be reflected from two aspects; namely; freedom and duty.

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<sup>55</sup> The utilitarian point of view also demands the agent to distance from herself and involve in calculation of pain and pleasure. According to Williams, this would be as impossible as to follow the moral command of the categorical imperative.

A man who has such a ground project will be required by Utilitarianism to give up what it requires in a given case just if that conflicts with what he is required to do as an impersonal utility maximizer when all the causally relevant considerations are in. That is a quite absurd requirement. But the Kantian, who can do rather better than that, still cannot do well enough. For impartial morality, if the conflict really does arise, must be required to win; and that cannot necessarily be a reasonable on the agent. (Williams, *Moral Luck*, p. 14)

<sup>56</sup> Williams, Bernard. *Morality, An Introduction to Ethics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1972. p. 68.



To start with freedom; Hegel identifies freedom as the essential property or substance of human will.<sup>57</sup> This is something to be considered “as given” and we need to simply believe it. This is important because Hegel does not want to evaluate willing bounded by simply acting or thinking. Hegel sees freedom as the self-actualization (of human spirit) that occurs neither in thought nor simply in practice. Therefore, he initially rejects the distinction between the theoretical and practical spheres. Willing (i.e. freedom, which is its substance), is a “particular way of thinking” which reveals itself in the existence. In other words, freedom is an empty concept when thought without relating to actions. As a continuation of this view, for Hegel freedom cannot be the independency of our rationality over our animality. Hegel suggests that the freedom of the human being is the “Idea of right”. That means the Idea, as the condition for something to exist, for human being it refers to the co-existence of her soul and body.<sup>58</sup> As a result the particular needs and demands of the individuals should not be put down through the abstraction by thought. The actualization of self, or particular demands of individuals (subjective freedom) finds its authentic actuality and verity only through an interpenetration with objective freedom (universal substantial will that is revealed in historical institutions).<sup>59</sup>

Considered in the abstract, rationality consists in general in the unity and interpenetration of universality and individuality. Here, in a concrete sense and in terms of its content, it consists in the unity of objective freedom (i.e. of the universal substantial will) and subjective freedom (as the freedom of individual knowledge and of the will in its pursuit of particular ends).<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Hegel, G.W. *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991.p. 35.

<sup>58</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, p. 26.

<sup>59</sup> Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. p. 276.

<sup>60</sup> Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. p. 276.

Secondly, Hegel totally disagrees with the Kantian notion of duty also, regarding it as an empty formalism, or as a rhetorical device.<sup>61</sup> He claims it to be ultimately abstract. This duty notion cannot be practical at all, as it fails to associate with any concrete actuality for individual. Therefore according to Hegel, no specific mode of action is justified by “duty for the sake of duty” which leads the thought to circularity within itself. For Hegel, that universally binding duty or *a priori* imperatives of reason has also an initial error: the principles of experience (practice/action) are legislated through concepts and principles before experience. To state the absurdity of this reasoning, Hegel draws an analogy between *a priori* moral concepts and talking of the vice of theft, without having a content such as human life or private property. In Hegelian thought the ends of the individual in the first glance are particular, purely private and contingent. Unlike a universal and abstract notion of duty the binding value of those individual ends are provided through actual institutions of the state and “collective rationality” of the society.<sup>62</sup>

It is impossible to give full account of Hegel’s own notion of freedom and duty; which would require a separate thesis on its own, yet briefly it can be summarized that Hegel rejects Kantian abstraction with respect to freedom and duty. Freedom cannot be considered as an idea in abstraction and without any reference to concrete actions. Besides actuality of freedom requires a unification of the internal and the external; a merge of the universal with the particular.

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<sup>61</sup> Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. p. 162.

<sup>62</sup> Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. p. 222.

#### 4. Unhealthy Dividedness

A contemporary of us, Michael Stocker also mentions a tension born within the individual because of her dividedness. This disharmony within the moral agent, who has been divided into distinct spheres of internal personality and an externality, causes an unhealthy psychology. Calling this disharmony a “moral schizophrenia”, Stocker claims the agent suffers from a rivalry between her motives and reasons to act.<sup>63</sup> Stocker regards deontological moral theories as dehumanizing the individual. Accordingly, he accuses them to repel everything that belongs to “person”s such as love, affection, fellow feeling and community.<sup>64</sup> Such theories can provide an indirect reason to act at best. That is, the knowledge or the idea of righteousness would be indirectly motivating for the agent. Nevertheless, in such a personal issue as ethics, talking of indirectness seems futile either to act in or to understand particular cases. This is because ethical relations mostly involve inter personal qualities such as love and affection, and those qualities make the direct motivations to act.<sup>65</sup> Stocker provides us a clever example to reflect the psychological deficiency of duty-based conception of morality. Not only the person who is to act on the “call of duty”, but also the one who is to be acted upon in this respect would be psychologically broken. Stocker asks us to suppose ourselves as a patient in a hospital. Would any of us wish to be visited by our friends just because they feel obliged to do so? Obviously once formulated like this, we all shall answer that

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<sup>63</sup> Stocker, Michael. “The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories.” *The Journal of Philosophy* 12 Aug. 1976 : p. 454.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 461.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 463.

question negatively. Stocker suggests that this kind of a conception of morality makes the legislative and motivational aspects of our actions irrelevant. Once we aim rationally at the right act, we are distanced to our irrational motivations.

Correspondingly, in this picture getting pleasure out of right actions is unwanted. The agent suffers from an unhealthy divided inner psychology.

In the book *Valuing Emotions*, which he co-authored with Elizabeth Hegeman, they provide a set of mind-opening essays.<sup>66</sup> They try to provide a philosophical perspective which embraces psychoanalysis and anthropology. As the title suggests their perspective locates emotions at the heart of human identity. Stocker states that emotions are valuable for action and they are essential constituents of life.<sup>67</sup>

Emotions do not only have instrumental usefulness, to provide us to act in a certain way. What we regard as “human life” would not be what it is without emotions.

Therefore as a mandatory continuation of what we are, emotions are “constitutively and functionally” vital. Nevertheless it is important to underline that Stocker introduces a distinctive notion of emotion. Emotions cannot be comprehended in terms of mere feelings. While they surely involve feelings, they are ambiguously more than this.<sup>68</sup>

Emotions help us “gain knowledge and understanding” and also have an “epistemological value”. Through experiencing certain emotions we first learn about the nature of emotions; and via this awareness we can develop a retrospection. This process, according to Stocker, necessitates having a particular way or ways of

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<sup>66</sup> Stocker, Michael and Hegeman, Elizabeth. *Valuing Emotions*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

<sup>67</sup> Stocker, *Valuing Emotions*, p. 85.

<sup>68</sup> Stocker, *Valuing Emotions*, p. 186.

organizing and understanding the world, to devote our attention to certain things rather than any others, to care about certain possibilities.<sup>69</sup> In short, our experience of the world and understanding of the world is formed by emotive capacities.

In brief, then, to ask why we should care about, and attach any moral importance to, such “mere feelings” is, in effect, to ask why we should care about being cared about, why we should care about being held warmly, in the hearts, minds, and arms of those we care about. It is, more broadly, to ask why we should care about a vital, engaged, life, with and within ourselves, and with others. Once that question is seen as asking these questions, its answer will also be seen.<sup>70</sup>

Stocker’s insights and analysis are helpful to depict a particular description of agent constitution. Nevertheless his suggestions are descriptive in an anthropological sense rather than providing an ethical alternative. Still, he asserts that an Aristotelian ethical approach which embraces pleasures hand in hand with virtues would meet the demands of emotionally inspired agents<sup>71</sup> and would not cause a kind schizophrenia in morals.

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<sup>69</sup> Stocker, *Valuing Emotions*, p. 188.

<sup>70</sup> Stocker, *Valuing Emotions*, p. 187.

<sup>71</sup> Stocker, *Valuing Emotions*, p. 181.

## 5. Lacking Values

The moral ought both gains its obligation and seeks its legitimacy from the impartial reasoning of the agent. That demands the subject to act from duty. In that rough definition of ethics of deontology, there is usually no space left to cover moral virtues. In other words, virtues are thrown out of the moral frame where only the notions of right and wrong can persist. Accordingly, Kant is blamed for developing a narrow-scope morality that can be reduced into stagnant rule-following.<sup>72</sup> It is claimed that his morality lacks the vocabulary to talk of virtues which would provide a broad, soulful and embracing criteria for both the well-being of our characters and the righteousness of our actions. Alastair MacIntyre states that in the classical understanding, ethics furnishes us with certain anticipated qualities. An ethical agent strives to reach a state of excellence through her habituated or ongoing virtuous actions.<sup>73</sup> To be virtuous composes the basic motivation for ethics which would lead one to a harmonious and content well-being. In such a picture there is no need for a strict higher principle that would function to justify each and every case. In contrast, once we place values and virtues at the heart of moral sphere; in each and every case of acting the agent reflects specifically upon the most excellent possible way to take. In this way, being an ethical agent necessitates being virtuous; in other words, it demands the agent to possess certain qualities such as being honest, just, courageous and moderate or the like, depending on the given case. As a result, ethical questions are

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<sup>72</sup> Van Hooft, Stan. *Understanding Virtue Ethics*. UK: Acumen Publishing, 2006. p. 7-12

<sup>73</sup> MacIntyre, Alastair. *A Short History of Ethics*. Great Britain: Routledge, 1968. p. 23-28.

formulated initially to discuss “in what manner to act”, instead of “what to do” as they aim at determining the values to frame the scope of good actions. Accordingly the answers are provided specifically to particular conditions in the light of prospected virtues. According to MacIntyre, Kant suggests a totally egoistic notion of happiness so that one should avoid to take it as the motivating principle of her actions. Furthermore, any considerations regarding the consequences of possible actions should be ignored while choosing the proper act. These conceptions cancel the possibility of one who wishes to be driven by the moral law, to take the well-being of herself and her society into consideration.<sup>74</sup> Moral command demands one to abstract herself from her own inclinations and social awareness, social welfare. It does not provide us a content to act upon, yet it only legislates on what not to do in given circumstances.

In the Kantian picture, as MacIntyre claims, we are left alone with an empty formula of universalizability. It serves as the single criterion to acknowledge actions as morally permissible. As he further argues, this test of universalizability is so unreliable that almost any maxim can pass it through an ingenious and consistent formulation.<sup>75</sup> The Kantian notion of duty is so formal that it can be filled to serve any aim. The aims, manners or instruments are not of importance as long as the maxim for the action can be formulized consistently. That is to say, if one is not already a good or virtuous person; the moral imperative would not guarantee a good action that is prospecting a good aim and based on a good motivation. Once we exclude substantial values and virtues from moral vocabulary, the moral command simply demands a proper justification of

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<sup>74</sup> MacIntyre, Alastair. *A Short History of Ethics*, p. 123- 125.

<sup>75</sup> MacIntyre, Alastair. *A Short History of Ethics*, p. 126.

universalizability. As a result, this formalistic understanding of morality can serve for any aim, which may be bad or even fascist, but dutiful and prevalent.

MacIntyre suggests that human beings are dependent on other humans and the virtues as the regulating principle within social sphere. Humans are characteristically bound to their families, friends and coworkers with respect to their practical reasoning. Isolating one from the educative, corrective and inspiring network of her social environment cancels the possibility of developing a mastery in her practical capacities.

We have so far then identified two crucial respects in which virtues are indispensable to human flourishing: without developing some range of intellectual and moral virtues we cannot first achieve and then continue in the exercise of practical reasoning; and without having developed some range of those same virtues we cannot adequately care for and educate others so that they first achieve and are then sustained in the exercise of practical reasoning. But now we encounter a third: without the virtues we cannot adequately protect ourselves and each other against neglect, defective sympathies, stupidity, acquisitiveness, and malice.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair. *Dependent Rational Animals*. USA: Duckworth, 1999. p.98.



## 6. Lacking Harmony

In this part I want to focus on the criticism that deontological ethical theories do not allow one to undertake her constant flourishing or moral development as the central purpose of ethics. This human flourishing usually reveals in relation to a certain understanding of “good life”, as it’s in the ancient Greek context. This is highly related with previously mentioned criticisms, yet in this section I will particularly focus on the idea of harmony or excellence. This harmony refers to an ongoing human flourishing and peace with respect to all her capacities. Virtuous life means a good life, even without a direct reference to a capitalized notion of Good. Virtue ethics enables us to talk of good and bad actions rather than right and wrong ones; which focus on control and legitimacy, but not on harmony and desideration. Accordingly under such a conceptualization the agent can be considered to lead a virtuous and at the same time happy life which deserves to be deemed excellent.

The question “what should I do?” only covers a specific action at a specific moment. That is to say, it does not suggest a certain way of life based on particular values or motives. Several critics of Kant regard his moral theory as defenseless against these accusations.<sup>77</sup> Schiller as a contemporary of Kant was one of those thinkers who raised a similar objection. Similar to Stocker’s claim of the unhealthiness of inner psychology, Schiller also suggests that putting aside values and emotions, we cannot speak of inner and outer harmony for the moral agent. On the whole, Schiller accepts a

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<sup>77</sup> MacIntyre and Williams are ardent defenders of this criticism. They both agree on the idea that the historical development of ethical thought in time resulted in a break between ancient and modern conceptions of morality. They suggest that without values, virtues and character notions; ethical thought cannot prescribe a “good life” in which we can think of the happiness of the individual hand in hand with her well-being and well-being of her fellow citizens. As I referred to Williams and MacIntyre from different perspectives in the previous sections, for this section I will make use of Schiller’s criticisms.

Kantian idea of morality with its initial premises, but he rejects the incompatibility between the rational and irrational aspects of the agent. In *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* despite the title Schiller does not handle simply aesthetic notions or problems. In his nine letters, he discusses man's moral perfection along with his social and political status. Preferring such a title for the topics discussed under it seems consistent with Schiller's general perspective which demands a unity in man's social, moral and aesthetic aspects. Schiller talks of several dichotomies that surround man. Namely, he points us towards several incompatibilities such as between Reason vs. Nature, idea vs. sense, the individual vs. the whole, public authority vs. autonomy of man, and duty vs. inclination.<sup>78</sup> He analyzes those issues on the grounds that have been formed by opposing schools of thought; i.e., rationalism (-or in certain lines- idealism) as opposed to sensationalism. Nevertheless, Schiller seems to be in search of a negotiation between these approaches. In his first letter Schiller addresses the Kantian system in which all men are equal in their access to imperatives of reason through their rationality, yet Schiller criticizes the incapacity of the analytic method that is mostly identified with rationalism. The analytic method divides and categorizes the phenomena, however the moral life and the aesthetic needs of man claim a natural unity; in which nature and reason, the ideal and the phenomenal embrace each other immediately. Therefore Being, truth or beauty do not levitate in the sky as a distinct realm from man's moral, social and aesthetic being. Schiller carries this argument to the political sphere in his second letter. The laws of reason provide a guidance in both aesthetics and morals. The moral agent can legislate for herself her own principles to act. Through this autonomy

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<sup>78</sup> Schiller, Friedrich. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967. p. 4-13.

she can be free. Accordingly the legitimacy of the state should also be grounded on that base. Only in a state where people are moral and autonomous, and the authority of the state is a simple complementary above these singular self-authorities, men can be free. Nonetheless, a dictatorial relation between the state and the individual, between public legislation and self-legislation or even furthermore a despotic hegemony of one's own reason over her sensations fails to provide freedom; that is morality and harmony. For the sake of the ideal and rational, the natural and physical aspect must not be terminated, likewise for the sake of the state (or totality) the individual (or plurality) must not be abolished. Schiller calls for an equilibrium and unity among those notions. Otherwise those fragmentations result in an alienation for the agent from herself and from society. In the sixth letter, Schiller describes another aspect of this polarization, i.e., how modern agent suffers from these binaries and loses her unity as she is reduced into a one-dimensional being with a fragmented intellect and specialized sort of knowledge.

That is to say, Schiller is worried that suppressing the sensuous aspect of the agent –which could be educated, transformed and finally involved in ethical life- under the dictate of reason would lead to an unresolvable and everlasting combat.<sup>79</sup> That conflict would fail to build a harmonious consensus between the moral and natural drives of the agent. According to that claim, for Kant, it would never be morally legitimate to act upon certain natural drives such as sympathy or benevolence, whereas Schiller asserts that “will” must engage with “desire”. Only after that, it would be

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<sup>79</sup> Gauthier, Jeffrey A. “Schiller’s Critique of Kant’s Moral Psychology: Reconciling Practical Reason and an Ethics of Virtue.” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* December 1997: 513-544.

possible to attribute a “transformative” power to practical reason -rather than an imperative one.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 530.

## 7. Pleasure

Getting pleasure out of virtuous behaviors has been one of the key terms of virtue ethics. Mostly a virtuous person has been defined as one who has refined her sentiments as to enjoy ethical requirements. Mostly Aristotelian ethics is taken as a standard of reference concerning the basic elements of virtue ethics. Therefore, in this section I will briefly give an account of Aristotle's ethics with respect to pleasure; more precisely on the relation of habituation and pleasure.

In *Nicomachean Ethics*<sup>81</sup>, Book I, Aristotle introduces politics as the master of arts; aiming at making the citizens to be of a certain character which requires goodness and nobility. Accordingly this initially demands an inquiry of the goodness of man. Aristotle associates the goodness of man with happiness. It is the only thing that is desirable in itself. Happiness is something honourable and complete, and it seems to expose itself as a first principle.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless what sort of happiness should be regarded in this way should then be answered. Happiness does not simply correspond to an external goodness. It involves external goods, goods of the soul and goods of the body.<sup>83</sup> Sticking to one single form of goodness; i.e. happiness, would fail to provide the divine completeness that it suggests. Therefore a proper notion of happiness shall include pleasures, honour and contemplation.<sup>84</sup> Aristotle further suggests that happiness is virtue, as the underlying principle of all virtuous actions.

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<sup>81</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

<sup>82</sup> Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1103a.

<sup>83</sup> Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1098b.

<sup>84</sup> Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1095b – 1096a.

The pleasures of the masses, because they are not pleasant by nature, conflict with one another, but the pleasures of those who are fond of noble things are pleasant by nature. Actions in accordance with virtue are like this, so that they are pleasant to these people as well as in themselves. Their life therefore has no need of pleasure as some kind of lucky ornament, but contains its pleasure in itself, because, in addition to what we have already said, the person who does not enjoy noble actions is not good. For no one would call a person just if he did not enjoy acting justly, or generous if he did not enjoy generous actions; and the same goes for the other virtues.<sup>85</sup>

Therefore, Aristotelian ethics necessitates that you have to get pleasure out of virtuous actions to be a virtuous person. Nevertheless that pleasure comes off only if one can possess a mastery of acting virtuously. Virtues, specifically virtues of character which are our central concern at this point- can be acquired only through acting virtuously. By our nature we have the capacity to receive them potentially, and they can be developed by teaching; yet they are made perfect by habit. Habituated similar activities then give rise to states of character.<sup>86</sup> Aristotle asserts that in every case of possible action agents must think by themselves to decide what is the appropriate thing to do. Accordingly, he suggest that morality is about acting rather than an analysis of moral concepts as a theoretical task.<sup>87</sup>

Aristotle puts forward that it is our choices which make us blame- or praiseworthy. As a result, virtue requires making the right choice. The virtuous agent is supposed to choose “mean” in each case, avoiding the two vices of excess and deficiency which would spoil her well-being. Nevertheless the criteria of “mean” cannot

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<sup>85</sup> Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1099a.

<sup>86</sup> Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1103a.

<sup>87</sup> Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1105b.

be readily prescribed. It is determined by us, via a rational principle.<sup>88</sup> In every single case it can only be grasped by perception; that is, it is not accessible by pure reasoning. All the constitutive elements of each case – place, time, people, aims - should be taken into consideration as such things are “particulars”. Nevertheless only through practical wisdom it is possible to make a “rational choice” regarding them.<sup>89</sup> To conclude, this capacity of rational choice is shared only by those possessors of reason and it never demands what is impossible to actualize. Therefore rational principle constitutes the central characteristic of acting virtuously.

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<sup>88</sup> Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1109.

<sup>89</sup> Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1111b.

## 8. Life

The final criticism to be evaluated is that a reason-based morals would be against “life”. This criticism finds its source in Nietzsche’s analysis of slave revolt and free will. Therefore, to complete this chapter on the perspectives against Kant, a brief account of Nietzsche’s moral philosophy shall be provided.

### Slave Revolt:

In the first session of his *Genealogy*<sup>90</sup>, Nietzsche claims that through the course of history there has been a slave revolt, and traces of this revolt can be traced in basically two paths: moral vocabulary and the power relation between the social classes. Though the term “revolt” implies a big social movement or disorder, what is meant by “slave revolt” is an evolution that has actualized itself slowly within a long period of time. That is why Nietzsche claims it to be unnoticed by the majority and been internalized unconsciously.

The transformation in the meanings of the moral concepts and the values attributed to them is regarded to be the initial sign of moral evolution in *Genealogy*. Nietzsche asserts that a good method to study the history of morality is to own a historical point of view. Namely, it is important to see what meanings and values each moral concept connoted at a certain point in history would be enlightening to grasp what’s factual in contrast to an ahistoric and idealized approach.<sup>91</sup>Nietzsche starts by

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<sup>90</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. USA: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998.

<sup>91</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, p. 10.



analyzing the notion of “good”. He suggests that most commonly “good” is considered to be a notion that exists independently of all contingencies of human affairs, carrying its necessary value in itself. For instance, good actions are thought to be the ones that are unegoistic, yet Nietzsche defends that this unegoisticism originally is not a quality of good actions. That concept (unegoism) has started to be used along with goodness out of some usefulness. Nevertheless, this initial utility motivation behind correlating goodness with unegoism has been forgotten in time. That is, this advantage of usefulness, provided by unegoism, has become so habituated that the pragmatic motive has been unseen. Then what is left in the moral sphere is simply the match between goodness and unegoism, no matter how circumstantially it was attached to goodness by those who are in power. Therefore Nietzsche proclaims that moral values are manipulated or even created by the supremacy of the social classes. Once the aristocrats were the ones who had the privilege of moulding moral concepts. Aristocrats were noble, strong and superior having a ruling power in society. The others, rank and file, were weak and dependent. Those were the times when goodness was conceptualized hand in hand with nobleness, strength and power. The aristocrats were the good and powerful ones acting unegoistically towards those inferiors through their own preference. That is, unegoism was not originally a necessary part of being good. Nonetheless, after this initial situation was forgotten, the strength and power which were the values attached to goodness became indistinct and the weak ones embraced unegoism as the so-called necessary value to be attached to goodness.

To give a historical and factual account of the transformation of moral terminology Nietzsche describes the strife between the Jews and the Romans. The

weak, the impotent and the poor ones who were personified as Jews, were inferior to strong Roman warriors. Nietzsche concludes that since the inferiors could not stand against the superior ones in physical terms, they have been the agents of a slow and insidious revolt against their “masters”. This slave revolt resulted in a totally new moral idealization; that is as “the morality of resentment”.<sup>92</sup>

According to Nietzsche, this “moral victory” of the common man over the lords, creates its own sphere for actualization: “the realm of the spirit” or the soul. Since the “lamb” cannot triumph over the strong “beast of prey”; it rationalizes its defeat through a pretext of (so-called) deliberate renunciation. Their oppressed and unsatisfied thirst for revenge dwells behind the façade of mildness, love and solemnity. Their weakness and obligatory abstinence caused by this weakness is crowned with a “moral superiority” and spiritual perfection. As a result, all those qualities of meagerness, humbling oneself, hypocrisy and patience are attached to “being good”. This new notion of “good” born by resentment finds its opposite not in “bad” but in “evil”.<sup>93</sup> Nietzsche claims it to be a very substantial characteristic of slave morality.<sup>94</sup> While “bad” of noble-man connotes a temporal state, the “evil” of the oppressed gains a static and original status. The goodness of the slave needs this notion of evil to define itself and the others in contrast. All power demanding dispositions of the noble; physical strength, bodily health, wealth and appetite are then identified with evilness. That is, saying “yes” to life, or to the calls of the body or instincts, as being unattainable by the slave, are doomed to be devilish.

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<sup>92</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Genealogy*, p.19.

<sup>93</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Genealogy*, p.30.

<sup>94</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Genealogy*, p.21.

The slave revolt in morality ends up with victory according to Nietzsche.<sup>95</sup> The slave ideal of taming oneself, being rational, prudent and moderate have been the values adopted by civilized modern man. Therefore refuting the egoistic and life preserving exultations becomes an essential part of morality. Nonetheless this refusal carries in itself a paralysis, seeking an unhealthy satisfaction in its pain, deprivation and vileness. The revenge of being the loser is apotheosized by being the “godlike” and “good” ones on the earth. Moreover, hunger of victory against the triumph of the “strong and evil” ones is postponed for another realm: namely “in the kingdom of God”.<sup>96</sup>

It follows that, for Nietzsche, the moral values that have been dignified especially in Christian ethics, lack the essential innate value they claim to have. To control oneself, to repress one’s desires actually means to deny life. That is to say, the autonomy which is claimed to reveal through our governance on our empirical-self loses its value. According to Nietzsche, all merits related to self-control, or legislation are nothing but repressions by internalized values.

#### Freedom of the Will:

The notion of freedom or freedom of the will almost always has been considered in connection with a self-awareness. This self-awareness connotes a rational self, the boundaries of which can be rationalized at least as a distinct substance. Therefore to understand Nietzsche’s approach to freedom of the will, it’s useful to take a glance at how he evaluates the notion of self. In the first section of *Genealogy*, Nietzsche initially negates the idea that a substance or soul holds together all the activities of the agent. That is, the notion of a “subject” which is the substratum of all acts is simply an

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<sup>95</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, p. 17.

<sup>96</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, p. 28.

artificial concept.<sup>97</sup> This subject is produced for its functionality in holding one responsible for her choices and actions. As discussed above; slave morality wants to rationalize and idealize its impotency. Therefore slaves want it to be their own choice to be who they are. That is why morality needs a notion of “neutral self” on to which it can build the responsibility of choosing between the weak & good, or strong & evil. Nevertheless, Nietzsche claims that neither the existence of such a subject nor its freedom to prefer one of the two poles is genuine. He asserts that the weakness or the strength simply exists essentially and is not a matter of freedom of choice.<sup>98</sup>

In the second part of *Genealogy* Nietzsche analyzes deeper what grounds this constructed self, freedom and responsibility rise all together hand in hand. His initial premise regarding human nature is that human being is an animal or a wild beast. This beast as a “paradoxical task” of nature is one which is “permitted to promise”.<sup>99</sup> Following the arguments through these premises Nietzsche states that to promise needs certain qualities such having a memory, an active faculty of willing, a capacity to calculate, reckon and visualize. All those components of promising, thus become actual initially by a notion of free, rational, regular and unified self-image of man before his own eyes. Only after that, morality of custom can find a respondent within the wild beast of man for its oppressing values. The unrealized instincts of that beast accumulate within himself and are internalized. This internalization of oppressed instincts also feeds up the notion of soul or self. But this self who is taught to be tamed through social norms, customs and its own weakness; finds its rationalization in a “bad conscience”.

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<sup>97</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, p.25.

<sup>98</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, p.26.

<sup>99</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, p. 35- 36.

Bad conscience provides the foundation for the unegoistic values that aroused from “slavery revolt” in morality. Nevertheless they are actually nothing but camouflaged cruelty and hatred. Therefore, bad conscience of morality advocates a latent free will and a maltreated, oppressed self.<sup>100</sup>

In an ultimately contrast sense to Kant, Nietzsche claims that being moral eliminates autonomy. This is because according to him, morality is all about the taming of the instincts, saying “no” to life and domestication of the wild beast. Though he nullifies the notion of a rationalized (internalized) free will, Nietzsche mentions the instinctual freedom of the super human. This figure of the super human is the opposite of slave morality who owns a fundamentally different conscience. The super human being is free in the actual sense and instinctively, and has an “independent long will”.<sup>101</sup> This "noble wild beast" has the strength and mastery over himself. He is not oppressed with the malicious goodness that does not let him release his instincts. Therefore, that sovereign individual has the power to act, to promise and will in the full sense. This notion of free will resembles a drive of nature embodied in the flesh, blood and muscles of the beast man. Namely, it is neither a rational faculty nor a manifestation of a spiritual substance. This is a “super-moral” status, and real autonomy is actualized only through it. Because of this, Nietzsche claims that all through history the men of better conscience have always had more strength, courage, nobility and freedom as opposed to human beings of resentment who beguile themselves in a fake form of artificial or rational freedom.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, p. 59.

<sup>101</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, p. 36.

<sup>102</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, p. 49.

What seems here as a kind of determinism is that nobles are born noble and weak ones have their weakness as an essential part of their existence, not the consequence of a free choice. Therefore though Nietzsche claims that the world is free of complete determinism<sup>103</sup>, being a spectacular place for the spectator eyes of the gods or human beings, this caste-like order of human species seems to be totally determined by powers other than man himself. Correspondingly, this pre-established superiority of the noble man, bestows on him a higher rank of will from the very beginning. This is why, for Nietzsche, considering the equality of the wills would be a hostility against life<sup>104</sup>. The essence of life in the evolutionary progress reveals as a “will to power”, rather than a mediocre survival through adaptation.

To conclude, for Nietzsche free will is an instinct, a will to power through which one says “yes” to oneself and life. According to this picture, we cannot talk of substantial values for ethics. Besides; we have no reason to dignify suppressing our empirical self, because human beings are regarded as primarily instinctual beings. Correspondingly, we have no ground to attribute a transparent rational self to the sum total of experiences.<sup>105</sup>

In this sphere, i.e., the sphere of the law of obligation, the cradle of the world of moral concepts is to be found, -" guilt," "conscience," "duty," "sacredness of

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<sup>103</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, p.44.

<sup>104</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, p.50.

<sup>105</sup> Nietzsche, in the Third Treatise of *Genealogy* directly addresses Kant and criticizes his account of impartiality, or disinterestedness initially with respect to his aesthetics (p. 72 -73). As it would be impossible to succeed reflecting Nietzsche’s moral perfective in its totality; I had to be very selective about the points to be considered. Accordingly, I chose two points which seem much more foundational and related to our central concern in this thesis; i.e. : the suppression of the self via articulated (historical) norms, and the false assumption of definite rational self.

duty." Their origin, as the origin of everything great on earth, was for a long time sprinkled and thoroughly saturated with blood. And might we not add that this world never again could rid itself entirely of a certain smell of blood and torture? (Not even excepting the old Kant: the categorical imperative smells of cruelty ... ) Here also that dismal-and now perhaps inseparable-combination of the ideas of "guilt and suffering" was first made.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, p. 41.

## CHAPTER 3

### KANTIAN ETHICS

In this chapter, to be able to give a relatively complete account of Kantian Ethic, first it is necessary to start with Kant's account of reason. As we shall see, in contrast to Hume, Kant considers reason as an active faculty both in its theoretical and in its practical uses. Accordingly, reason involves *a priori* principles, concepts and categories. Without those innate capacities of reason, Kant suggests that we could not have *a priori* knowledge regarding matters of fact; and we could not talk of *a priori* moral principles. Through its principles and synthetizing capacity, reason seeks a unity in the sum total of all its experiences.<sup>107</sup> Namely, in the first part, "Reason as an Active Faculty"; firstly I will provide an answer to Hume's objection against reason's potentiality. Secondly, I will try to suggest how this active faculty can determine the will directly and cause motivation to act. At this point, I expect to respond to criticisms by Williams and Stocker. In the second part of this chapter, in "Kant as a Possible Virtue Ethicist", I will assert certain components of Kantian ethics which may provide a more comprehensive picture of Kant's position in contrast to over-simplified

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<sup>107</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. p. 298.



commentaries which take only the *Groundwork* into consideration. Hopefully this fairer picture shall provide us with some arguments regarding other criticisms.

## 1. Reason as an Active Faculty

To understand how it is possible, or more correctly, necessary for Kant to attribute a practical capacity to reason, we need to refer to his epistemological foundation briefly. Because only upon that ground it could be possible to envisage the rationally and ethically autonomous Kantian subject. Accordingly, the space spared for practical reason reveals itself only upon Kant's specific understanding of speculative reason. Kant's central task in his philosophy is to reflect upon the limits; the limits of theoretical reason, the limits that define the agency, the limits of knowledge and belief, and so forth. Kantian ethics is a system for "rational beings" born by reason. Therefore, to comprehend Kantian Ethics initially we should elucidate how the rational capacities of those rational beings are defined in this system. Kant claims that such a distinction is compulsory as it reveals when reason reflects upon itself. In his first *Critique* Kant explains what critique of pure reason means as a science:

... a science of the mere estimation of pure reason, its sources and boundaries, as the propaedeutic to the system of pure reason. Such a thing would not be a doctrine, but must be called only a critique of pure reason, and its utility in regard to speculation would only be a negative, serving not for the amplification but only for the purification of our reason, and for keeping it free of errors, by which a great deal is already won.<sup>108</sup>

Hence, in this analysis of human reason in a scientific manner, Kant aims at a kind of foundation for theoretical sciences and defining a boundary for all possible knowledge. Indeed, what he did can also be labeled as redefining the knowledge, thought and belief,

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<sup>108</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. p. 149.

and the boundaries in between them. These boundaries also function as determiners distinguishing the theoretical from the practical. Thus, we need to know these cognitive boundaries to see where Kant locates his morality as a practical system, but of reason.

Kant claims that, “all our cognition commences with experience, yet it does not on that account all arise from experience”<sup>109</sup>, so that his critique of pure reason focuses on the *a priori* conditions of experience. Because only after that, Kant suggests, we can find an explanation for the compatibility of our reasoning about the external world and the laws of natural sciences. This, as Kant himself names- “Copernicus Revolution” gives rise to the rationally autonomous subject.<sup>110</sup> That is, *a priori* cognitive conditions of experience in the subject become the laws of experience. The key term here for Kant is metaphysics. He aims to define metaphysics as a science that is derived from reason with a critique of it. Kant thought that only such a kind of a critique could provide a ground for scientific metaphysics. The scientific emphasis of Kant in the conception of a *true metaphysics* is crucial for us, since it is the touchstone to discuss Kant’s metaphysics of morals. In the Preface of *Prolegomena* Kant asks the following questions:

If metaphysics is a science, why is it that it cannot, as other sciences, attain universal and lasting acclaim? If it is not, how does it happen that, under the pretense of a science it incessantly shows off, and strings along the human understanding with hopes that never dim but are never fulfilled?<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 136.

<sup>110</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 110.

<sup>111</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. Cambridge University Press, 2004. p. 5.

This obviously indicates that Kant was uneasy with the ambiguity and uncertainty of metaphysics. He complains that metaphysics has such a “limitless” usage that it deals with concepts as distinct from each other as substance, cause and effect, mental faculties, existence and attributes of God, imagination and intellect, world as a whole, human soul and the world’s order. Nonetheless, it is thought as “science”, just like mathematics or geometry, as “a systematic body of knowledge”. Yet in the pretense of being systematic, metaphysics is filled with anything beyond physical or empirical that was excluded from other sciences. This is why Kant aims at a discovery of pure reason, its capacities and sources. He believes that only discovering these capacities and sources could demonstrate to us how any kind of cognition is possible. As a result of these discoveries and estimations, Kant considers that we shall see how rich and well-equipped reason is even before experience. That is to say, unlike the philosophers in the empiricist tradition, Kant regards reason as a vivid faculty already equipped with certain functions and principles even before experience. In the Lockean and Humean tradition, the foundation of all knowledge is embedded completely in the empirical input of sensation and reflection.<sup>112</sup> In other words, empiricists such as John Locke suggest that it is impossible to gain any kind of knowledge before experience or without experience. That type of cognition is called *a posteriori*, that is, ‘based upon or from experience’. Hume carries away the notion of a posteriori cognition even further with a skeptical viewpoint. As mentioned before, he divides all the objects of human reason or enquiry into two; ‘the relation of ideas’ and ‘the matters of fact’. The former group involves the sciences of geometry, algebra, and arithmetic. Hume claims that judgments regarding

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<sup>112</sup> Guyer, Paul. *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992. p. 152- 155.

that group could be stated ‘by the mere operation of thought, without dependence on what is anywhere existent in the universe’. In this demonstrative, *a priori* reasoning, no contradiction is possible. His skepticism is about the judgments on the ‘matters of fact’. Centered in the impossibility of grounding casual necessity, Hume claims that propositions regarding matters of fact could never be ascertained or justified in the same demonstrative way. Likewise, he considers reason totally deficient and inert with regard to its practical aspect.

At this point, we need to get back to the Kantian understanding of metaphysics which is claimed to provide an access to the competency of reason in both theoretical and practical sense. Kant divides metaphysics into two parts. The first part of metaphysics appears with an analysis of the *a priori* principles and concepts constituting the transcendental conditions of experience, sensation of the objects.<sup>113</sup> Its object must be related to “possible experience”, namely to the condition that makes it possible to sense the objects. The task of this first part of metaphysics is to build up a systematic body of knowledge about objects of the senses (or empirical reality) using the discoveries of the *a priori* principles embedded in pure reason. Therefore, we need to underline that this first part of metaphysics is indispensable for human cognition since it guarantees the validity of *a priori* principles of all natural sciences. That is to say, most sciences have an *a priori* / pure part, stating a set of *a priori* principles that are considered to be valid in objective reality. Those principles are *a priori*, whereas the objects of those sciences are empirical reality. Denying the possibility of *a priori* knowledge regarding the empirical world is unacceptable for Kant. He thinks that just

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<sup>113</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 111.

like mathematical propositions (the relation of ideas in Humean terminology), the proposition of “every alteration must have a cause”, as emergent from the commonest use of understanding, must have strict universality. Therefore it is impossible to reject their *a priori* validity. Taking all these points concerning the possibility or the validity of *a priori* cognition of empirical reality into consideration, Kant tries to bring together the critical thinking of skepticism and the productive ground that rationalism provided for all theoretical sciences to grow. That is, he neither gives up the indispensability of *a priori* principles regarding the objects of senses nor can he ignore the groundlessness of these principles in dogmatic rationalism. Accordingly, Kant’s metaphysics, which he claims to provide this aim; also is claimed to be made of synthetic *a priori* judgments.<sup>114</sup> Leaving aside the analysis of the nature of synthetic *a priori* judgments, the second part of metaphysics must be analyzed to shift back to Kant’s defense of the practical aspect of reason.

As mentioned earlier, reason’s reflection upon itself necessitates this second part of metaphysics.<sup>115</sup> That part of metaphysics which is ‘far more preeminent in its importance and sublime in its final aim’ deals with the concepts totally beyond the world of senses.<sup>116</sup> Since the use of understanding is limited to possible experience, it does not provide human reason the completeness it yearns. Accordingly, reason tends

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<sup>114</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena*, p. 22.

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But from this deduction of our faculty of cognizing *a priori* in the first part of metaphysics, there emerges a very strange result, and one that appears very disadvantageous to the whole purpose with which the second part of metaphysics concerns itself, namely that with this faculty we can never get beyond the boundaries of possible experience, which is nevertheless precisely the most essential occupation of this science. (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 112)

<sup>116</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 139.

to use the categories of the understanding beyond the empirical too. This misuse is called as “*transcendental illusion*”.<sup>117</sup> Our cognition regarding the objects of possible experience can be confirmed by experience. However, the absolute totality of all possible experience, the completeness or the collective unity of the whole possible experience exceeds the intuitive boundaries and becomes transcendent.<sup>118</sup> Therefore, the unifying principle of understanding that starts with experience, fails to cognize a total completeness, which lacks intuition. Kant calls these concepts which never have their objects in possible experience *ideas of pure reason*. Only the critique of pure reason over itself can provide us a getaway to settle this illusion of pseudo-cognition, since reason ceaselessly inclines to reach at this cognitive unity. It would be just a settlement as reason can never avoid these illusions or end its dialect. Therefore just like the laws of natural sciences, e.g. metaphysics of physics, Kant thinks it is obligatory to provide a metaphysics of morals which is to be called “laws of freedom” or “doctrine of morals”.<sup>119</sup> Kant claims that to define the ideas of pure reason we must analyze the functions of syllogisms in the way we did to judgments to reach the pure concepts of understanding. Since syllogisms are not immediate inferences from experience but they are inferences from the succession of judgments, the unifying functions of syllogisms upon judgments would lead us to the distinction of the ideas of pure reason. Accordingly, the categorical, hypothetical and disjunctive divisions of syllogisms contains the idea of a complete subject (psychological ideas), the idea of the

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<sup>117</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 387.

<sup>118</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena*, p. 80.

<sup>119</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork for the metaphysics of Morals* [electronic resource]; edited and translated by Allen W. Wood. New Haven : Yale University Press, 2002. p. 3.

complete series of conditions (cosmological ideas), and the determination of all concepts in the idea of a complete sum total of the possible (theological ideas).<sup>120</sup>

None of these ideas we stated above can be intuited spatio-temporally, yet still reason inclines to assume a kind of knowledge regarding each of them. Thus to know them is impossible as Kant located knowledge within the necessary boundaries of intuition. Assuming an object of intuition regarding each of these ideas results in pseudo-knowledge, namely in considering the subjective assumption as an objective knowledge. In other words, this is an effort for noumenal cognition in which reason goes astray in the sophistry of knowing things in themselves.

The first idea of reason, the idea of a complete subject, appears by the need of unity and completeness in experience, and envisages a self as an object of possible experience. That is to say, reason tends to cognize a self without any intuition. In this paralogy, it attributes the concepts of understanding –the concepts for pure intuition- to this “noumenal self” as if it were an object of appearance.<sup>121</sup> Thus reason assumes “self” as a substance, a simple being with a personality identical through time. Therefore, these are all paralogical thoughts that compose the pure, transcendental or rational psychology. Nevertheless since this is a natural disposition of reason, how is it possible to get away from it? As the unity of consciousness is indispensable for the possibility of experience<sup>122</sup>, how is it possible to avoid paralogisms? The only way to

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<sup>120</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena*, p. 80.

<sup>121</sup> Actually, Kant introduces a rather humble notion of “self”, keeping it as a noumenal entity. Therefore he could free himself certain criticisms by Nietzsche. Nevertheless, without a claim to give an account of that entity’s ultimate nature; undoubtedly in the core Kant attach a rational a capacity to it. Furthermore that rational capacity is evident to the self itself.

<sup>122</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 452.



avoid this, is by staying within the boundaries of possible experience, by not trying to reach a nature of the self, disconnected from its experiences, or a self without a predicate. This is not a skepticism regarding the existence of the self, or “I”, or the subject; conversely with our inner and outer experiences we must *think* that it exists, yet we can never *cognize* it.<sup>123</sup> As a result, Kant suggests that we should give up “fruitless and extravagant speculation” to build up a theoretical knowledge of the self, turning our self-knowledge towards “fruitful practical uses” of it.<sup>124</sup>

The second idea of pure reason appears in cosmological contemplation, and here the dilemma of speculative reason reveals itself as antinomies. Reason unavoidably desires a completeness in the perception of the universe, too. That is, it seeks a completion in the series (the chains of the conditioned and the condition) of the objects of senses, to have an unconditioned first condition or a complete unity in all possible perception. The cosmological idea starts with premises from the objects of possible experience, but the synthesis of reason expands the use of understanding transcendently. Therefore any experience, or any intuition, cannot match the cosmological idea any more.<sup>125</sup> Kant argues that reason seeks this completeness of the series in four respects:

- The absolute completeness of the composition of a given whole of all appearances.
- The absolute completeness of the division of a given whole in appearance.

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<sup>123</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena*, p. 85 – 90.

<sup>124</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 453.

<sup>125</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena*, p. 90.

- The absolute completeness of the arising of an appearance in general.
- The absolute completeness of the dependence of the existence of the alterable in appearance.<sup>126</sup>

In need of these completions, reason falls into four antinomies. That is, we can arrive at four theses and antitheses:

Thesis: The world has, as to time and space, a beginning (a boundary).

Antithesis: The world is, as to time and space, infinite.

Thesis: Everything in the world is constituted out of the simple.

Antithesis: There is nothing simple, but everything is composite.

Thesis: There exist in the world causes through freedom.

Antithesis: There is no freedom, but everything is nature.

Thesis: In the series of causes in the world there is a necessary being.

Antithesis: There is nothing necessary in this series, but in it everything is contingent.<sup>127</sup>

The first two of the antinomies are mathematical, the last two are dynamical. For each of them a dogmatic point of view which is consistent in itself would prove its thesis, yet again a consistent empiricist point of view could also prove its antithesis. Correspondingly, reason would have its speculative interest in each. Nonetheless,

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<sup>126</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 464.

<sup>127</sup> Kant, *Prolegomena*, p. 91.

neither of them is possible to be ultimately rejected or confirmed. Here again reason suffers from the misuse of its pure concepts of the understanding, .i.e., from trying to apply them without intuition. For instance, taking the third Thesis & Antithesis into consideration, if we follow the series in appearances, one by one preceding each other, we can trace them back endlessly and see the natural necessity. Nevertheless, if we try to comprehend them as a whole beyond experience to think the possible beginning of the total of appearances in general, we need to accept a free first cause against natural causal necessity. Therefore, in our enquiries we should not confuse the noumenal with the phenomenal one to avoid antinomies.<sup>128</sup> As a result, the rational cosmology which leads mind astray, out of possible experience, must be avoided. At this point, again, the idea of pure reason finds a meaningful use in the practical sphere. While we observe a casual necessity in the phenomena, at the same time all human beings think of themselves as free regarding their will.<sup>129</sup> “Therefore, freedom is only an idea of reason whose objective reality is doubtful in itself”.<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless even though we cannot give a theoretical account of freedom, practically we are aware that we are free. Our freedom reveals itself as practical necessity, as we are conscious of the moral law *a priori*, in an apodictical certainty.<sup>131</sup> Human beings are a part of the world of appearances, as they physically participate in the world of senses. In that sense, they are also bound by the causal necessity of this realm. On the other hand, they participate also in the intellectual realm through the awareness of their freedom. The causality of

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<sup>128</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 519.

<sup>129</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 71.

<sup>130</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 71.

<sup>131</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 41.

man's actions do not simply lie in the phenomena – in casual necessity. In this respect as rational beings, humans gain a dignity that bestows them an independence from laws of nature. Therefore she is supposed to obey no other law than the practical necessity of law of freedom.<sup>132</sup> It is only through morality that humanity owns this dignity. Accordingly, moral worth does not consist in the effects that arise from actions, but it appears in the dispositions, i.e. the maxims of the will. Moral law is the law of willing. No subjective disposition, nothing intermingled with experience and no concern for immediate satisfaction can interfere with the law of freedom. The virtues such as “fidelity in promises” and “benevolence from principle” have their inner worth via “the will that carries them out as an object of an immediate respect, for which nothing but reason is required in order to impose them on the will”.<sup>133</sup> To be a moral agent then means being capable of willing freely. If and only if our maxims raise above all phenomenal dependency; our will would be free of any heteronomy.<sup>134</sup> Our maxims are our subjective principles, whereas they are not imperatives.<sup>135</sup> Objective sanction of practical reason is manifested only in the categorical imperative. The categorical imperative is unconditionally legislative as it is purely rational and *a priori*. Our desires, feelings or any anticipated effect cannot be allowed in the determination of the “good will”. If our maxims are determined by any of these hypothetical imperatives then it would no longer be a free will. In other words, all practical principles which are grounded by the faculty of desire – not by reason-, are empirical, contingent and

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<sup>132</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 52.

<sup>133</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 53.

<sup>134</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997. p. 38.

<sup>135</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 18.

hypothetical; and accordingly they fail to possess moral worth. Autonomy, which is the capacity to will according to the law of freedom, has the moral worth and it is what grounds the dignity of the human and every rational nature.<sup>136</sup>

And now, what is it that justifies the morally good disposition or virtue in making such high claims? It is nothing less than the share that it procures for the rational being in the universal legislation, thereby making it suitable as a member in a possible realm of ends, for which it by its own nature was already destined, as end in itself and precisely for this reason as legislative in the realm of ends, as free in regard to all natural laws, obeying only those that it gives itself and in accordance with which its maxims can belong to a universal legislation (to which it at the same time subjects itself).<sup>137</sup>

To summarize, in our critique of reason, in the speculative sphere we are driven from objects and reach at *a priori* principles, however in the practical sphere we are to move from *a priori* principles then proceed to concepts of objects of practical reason - i.e. good and evil.<sup>138</sup> In the theoretical sphere metaphysically we carry out a negative task.<sup>139</sup> In this sphere we have a constitutive use of our faculties. On the other hand, in the second part of metaphysics we are involved in a positive task that reveals the regulative principle of reason. Correspondingly, it is this higher principle that regulates over the reason as a whole which makes us to talk of one reason that is not cloven.

The last transcendental idea, which is revealed as a problem of reason in the theoretical sphere, and which Kant suggests is the most important use of pure reason, is the ideal of pure reason. Kant calls this idea “an ideal”, since it connotes an individual

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<sup>136</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 54.

<sup>137</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 53.

<sup>138</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 76.

<sup>139</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 114.

thing who is found only in reason as the origin and the cause of all that exists and as the highest of all beings: God. The existence of God as a necessary deduction of reason or as the idea of reason exhibits itself, yet, in this deduction again, reason falls into the trap of the illusion of a noumenal cognition. That is, the speculative reason demands a theoretical knowledge regarding the existence of God and struggles to justify it in vain. It seeks ontological, cosmological and physico-theological proofs.<sup>140</sup> Nevertheless, none of these proofs provide a necessary (objective) connection between the evidence they use –namely the appearances–, and their implied subject –God–, who we can never intuit or cognize. As a result, transcendental or rational theology inclines to consider this subjective need of our mind as an objective necessity. In short, this idea of pure reason despite its undeniable presence and essentiality cannot find an objective validity in theoretical/speculative knowledge. This ideal can be valid in reason only according to a specific, chosen function.

Now I assert that all attempts of a merely speculative use of reason in regard to theology are entirely fruitless and by their internal constitution null and nugatory, but that the principles of reason's natural use do not lead at all to any theology; and consequently, if one did not ground it on moral laws or use them as guides, there could be no theology of reason at all.<sup>141</sup>

This third idea of reason also finds its proper use in practical sphere. The moral agent, who wills according to the categorical imperative, wills as a legislative member of an intellectual realm. Nevertheless to be able to act upon this assumption of an intelligible realm, which may contradict with the sensible, is only meaningful on the

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<sup>140</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 563.

<sup>141</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 586.

assumption of the highest original good.<sup>142</sup> The teleological unity of everything, the meaningful harmony of all may not be evident to us sensibly. Accordingly in several cases acts out of moral demands may not bring happiness. Once we regard everything to be bound by one rationality, the teleological demands of moral law and natural laws meet, but in an intelligible realm. Accordingly, we can think of a direct proportion between morality and happiness. What can make all of these possible is only that ideal of reason.

Kant claims that this idea of an intelligible world functions as an incentive in determining the will. Reason morally has its interest in that idea of intelligible world, however we cannot comprehend it precisely.<sup>143</sup> “Yet we are conscious through reason of law to which all our maxims are subject, as if a natural order must at the same time arise from our will.”<sup>144</sup> Accordingly we can envisage ourselves as members of this supersensible realm where each will is united around the moral law- as the only bounding natural law.

The three ideas of reason the practical expansions of which we have explicated can also be considered parallel to postulates of practical reason. The highest good, the immortality of the soul and freedom “proceed from the principle of morality, which is not a postulate but a law by which reason determines the will immediately”.<sup>145</sup> Those postulates are problematic for the speculative use of reason, as they give rise to

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<sup>142</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 682.

<sup>143</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 78.

<sup>144</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 39.

<sup>145</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 110.

paralogisms, antinomies or undeterminable sophistries. They transcend the uses of theoretical reason but they are immanent in practical reason, for practical purposes.

So far, to be able to give an account of the metaphysical richness of reason in both its practical and theoretical uses has been our initial concern. Through its own nature, i.e. via a necessitation of the limits of theoretical sphere; we are aware of an active, practical use of reason, too. I tried to depict how postulates of reason – which are revealed in the second part of metaphysics - build up the constitutive elements of practical philosophy. The moral demand of reason, which necessitates itself in us secures the possibility of regarding ourselves as free agents. We can claim to be the authors of our actions only by heeding that call and the hegemony of reason above the misleading multiplicity of other imperatives. Furthermore, it is again only possible – and necessitated- via reason’s practical aspect that the free agent can head towards a moral perfection in an eternal future where the worthiness to be happy may meet being happy in actuality.<sup>146</sup> Nevertheless, to provide answers to specific criticisms, not only the compulsory presence of practical reason but also the “force of practical of reason” is needed to be shown. This is because it is the only way to confirm reason’s actual involvement in our actions as the determiner of will.

Kant clearly argues that feelings cannot be the proper ground of the will.<sup>147</sup> Accordingly, any material principles such as happiness, self-love, pleasure or displeasure fail to provide a categorical imperative for maxims. Then, on what grounds can Kant claim a motivating capacity for reason? First of all, as I argued for in this

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<sup>146</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 109.

<sup>147</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 20.



section, reason is not an inert faculty since it is equipped with certain capacities and functions. Secondly, according to Kant, the essence of being an agent lies in our rationality and through this rationality we have an intellectual share in the order of all things. Besides, the postulates of practical reason immediately necessitate a particular conception of morality that demands that one act upon the laws of freedom. In one sense, Kant affirms that the question of how reason can be practical, that is, whether and how it can determine the will immediately, cannot be answered other than by reference to the necessary assumption of freedom.<sup>148</sup> Nevertheless later on he gives an account of the incentives of practical reason.

Kant suggests that actions can only be legitimate if they are done in accordance with law, whereas actions are moral if they are done for the sake of law.<sup>149</sup> Accordingly, as we are not holy beings, we can see that once we act simply for the sake of law it would give rise to “a feeling that can be called pain” as we “must thwart all our inclinations”.<sup>150</sup> How is it possible, then, to claim moral law capable of suppressing all other incentives and to be competent enough to motivate an action?

For the sake of the law and in order to give it influence on the will one must not, then, look for some other incentive by which that of the moral law itself might be dispensed with, because this would produce sheer hypocrisy without substance, and it is even hazardous to let any other incentive (such as that of advantage) so much as cooperate alongside the moral law; so nothing further remains than to determine carefully in what way the moral law becomes an incentive and, inasmuch as it is, what happens to the human faculty of desire as an effect of that determining ground upon it. For, how a law can be of itself and immediately a determining of the will (though this is what is essential in all

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<sup>148</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 40- 41.

<sup>149</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 62.

<sup>150</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 63.

morality) is for human reason an insoluble problem and identical with that of how a free will is possible. What we shall have to show *a priori* is, therefore, not the ground from which the moral in itself supplies an incentive but rather what its effects (or, to put it better, must effect) in the mind insofar as it is an incentive.<sup>151</sup>

Kant argues that law is the first condition of any worth above all other incentives. It is therefore “an object of the greatest respect and so too the ground of a positive feeling that is not of empirical origin and is cognized *a priori*”.<sup>152</sup> As it is not allowed to think of any antecedent feeling in the agent that is prior to moral law, the respect for the law should not be regarded as a pathological feeling.<sup>153</sup> Because the respect for the moral law is an effect of the consciousness of the moral law, it legitimately owns a casual power in the removal of the hindrances from the judgments of reason.<sup>154</sup> Accordingly this moral feeling help us to be able to humiliate incentives of sensibility and resist against their involvement in the determination of the will.<sup>155</sup>

Respect for the moral law is therefore the sole and also the undoubted moral incentive, and this feeling is also directed to no object except on this basis. First, the moral law determines the will objectively and immediately in the judgment of reason; but freedom, the causality of which is determinable only through the law, consist in this: that it restricts all inclinations, and consequently the esteem of the person himself, to the condition of compliance with its pure law.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 63.

<sup>152</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 63.

<sup>153</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 64.

<sup>154</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 65.

<sup>155</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 67.

<sup>156</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 67.

Kant very carefully and neatly draws the lines between concepts to give an accurate account of the borders surrounding the proper grounds of acting. The “elevating” moral feeling provides us with a “self-approbation”, as the agreement with the moral law enriches our moral worth in our own eyes.<sup>157</sup> Nevertheless, as the above quoted passage suggests, this self-esteem should not be treated unrestrictedly or very mistakenly be regarded as the determining ground of our maxims.<sup>158</sup> As a result, proving a certain rational motivation for the agent, “moral feeling” plays a key role to answer criticisms of Williams, Stocker and MacIntyre. For Hegel’s criticisms also moral respect may be regarded positioned somewhere between the abstractness of moral law and concreteness of its appreciation in us.

#### Some Further Concluding Remarks:

Hume introduces the notion of sympathy to ground a serious part of his ethical thought. Sympathy bestows a pseudo universality to moral sentiments and makes the moral values communicable. Even if Kant does not address Hume himself directly in his central moral works, he categorizes Hutcheson as a representative of moral feeling philosophers under the title of internal-subjective principle based ethics.<sup>159</sup> As this category owns its determining moral ground from a subjective and internal grounds,

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<sup>157</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 69.

<sup>158</sup> The *respect for the moral law* or –in other words- *the moral feeling* can provide us with an opportunity to compromise certain criticisms of Stocker with a Kantian standpoint. We can claim that this “rational feeling”, via its special status, may provide the midpoint between two extremes of, on the one side, bewailing the emotions, and on the other side, cancelling them all together.

<sup>159</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 36.

according to Kant they fail to respond basic demands of morality; i.e. objectivity and universality. Therefore we are carried back to our initial concern that reason is practical for Kant and this is a “must” to develop an autonomous, objective and universal ground for morality.

Secondly, the initial problem with Williams’s interpretation of categorical imperative lies in the fact that he takes the command of moral law as if it is external to the agent. The respect for the moral law, or awareness of the inner necessitation of categorical imperative seems to be ignored in Williams’s reading of Kant. While it has debated whether or not we can give a clear and distinct example of straightforwardly external reason type of philosophizing, many philosophy systems could escape from this blame when evaluated fairly within its own premises. First of all, the very notions of externality and internality are highly related with the borders we prefer to think of the agent to be surrounded by. Once I regard the agent to be a rational being essentially – who has a share from an all-encompassing Rationality- , it would be legitimate for me to regard each and every command of her reason verily internal to her. Similarly, if I prefer to depict an agent who can actualize herself if and only if she feels satisfied by the consequences of her actions; I may claim any reason to act, which would not bring about an immediate satisfaction- to be external for her. Therefore on the one hand, the external reason objection is relevant to our understanding of what an agent essentially is. On the other hand, Timothy Chappell provides another very convincing argument against the ambiguity of “external reason” notion. He states that we can consider some reasons to act more external, -or less attractive and less motivating- at first glance. Nevertheless, at the “second glance” they could be no more external to us through our perception of them. He uses the analogy of physical perception which makes us capable of enriching our “inner” selves. Chappell

criticizes John McDowell's effort to provide a depiction of an external reason theory via describing it as a view about moral perception, “the acquisition of a way of seeing things”.

But *literal* perception does not commit us to external reasons. When I literally “just see” something, my visual perception—even my well-habituated and skillful perception—adds something to my stock of internal, not external, reasons. If we take the perceptual analogy seriously in ethics, it is hard to see why we can't say the same about moral perceptions.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Chappell, Timothy, "Bernard Williams", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 2014. <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/williams-bernard/>.

## 2. Kant as a Possible Virtue Ethicist

### Commonsensical Practical Philosophy:

In the last part of the previous chapter, I tried to give an account of reason's competency to be involved in our actions. In this section further argument shall be offered to defend a compatibility between the Kantian moral system and the foundational motivations of virtue ethics. It is important to see that for Kant morality is innate for everybody as a part of our natural constitution, and it is not originally a distinct skill or a privileged set of knowledge. For Kant reason is not an alien external force that limits us from outside but a part of who we are.

First of all, Kant's description of the categorical imperative involves that every rational being has a direct access to it. We do not need a moral philosopher, nor a priest, nor a life coach to prescribe us what to do. In that sense, the sections of *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* are very meaningful. Kant starts with a "transition from common rational moral cognition to philosophical moral cognition". Then he moves "from popular moral philosophy to the metaphysics of morals", and the final step is the "transition to critique of pure practical reason". That means, there is a common rational morality even before Kant tries to build up a metaphysics of morals in a theoretical attitude. Kant claims that in the moral cognition of human reason we attain the principle of acting. That principle is always ready before the eyes of the agent as a compass

telling her what to do in all cases that she confronts.<sup>161</sup> Therefore, Kant claims that without any teachings or analysis one “knows” what is right or wrong to do. We are apt to get confused in hypothetical scenarios in the way the philosopher does who takes a multiplicity of considerations into account.<sup>162</sup> Nevertheless, in actuality we act through seeing the needle of a compass, not through referring to judgments, books or theoretical principles. We simply act in accordance with the guidance of our practical reason, even though we cannot provide a full explanation or analysis of how we know what to do speculatively or theoretically.<sup>163</sup> Nonetheless, Kant’s overall project in morality seems to be an effort to provide such kind of an explanation. Each step in the sections of *Groundwork* –as mentioned above- depicts the layers that this explanation goes through. Through these passages Kant tries to “ground” the moral law and its legislating power within in us. He gives a theoretical account of what is practical. In fact, the innateness of moral law for every rational being, besides the non-theoretical and action oriented character of it, already provides a ground for morality. That is to say, it would be futile to seek a theoretical answer to “why should we be moral?”. This is simply because we are what<sup>164</sup> we are. As in the final and the furthest step of his explication for the ground of morality, i.e.in the transition to pure practical reason, in some ways Kant admits the impossibility of the task he undertakes.

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<sup>161</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 19.

<sup>162</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 20.

<sup>163</sup> With this respect Kant’s approach resembles to Aristotelian practical wisdom.

<sup>164</sup> Purposefully I chose “what” instead of “who” which could imply some reference to identity. Nevertheless I wanted to refer humans, as a species,as rational beings.

Thus it is no fault of our deduction of the supreme principle of morality, but only an accusation that one would have to make against human reason in general, that it cannot make comprehensible an unconditioned practical law (such as the categorical imperative must be) as regards its absolute necessity; for we cannot hold it against reason that it does not will to do this through a condition, namely by means of any interest that grounds it, because otherwise it would not be a moral, i.e., a supreme, law of freedom. And thus we indeed do not comprehend the practical unconditioned necessity of the moral imperative, but we do comprehend its incomprehensibility, which is all that can be fairly required of a philosophy that strives in principles up to the boundary of human reason.<sup>165</sup>

In that sense Kantian understanding of morality appeals to the broadest ground that is possible. It does not involve any reference to a certain “good life” notion in its initial premises. Though this has been a point of criticism by virtue ethicists, it seems to me that such a formality makes it possible to talk of morals in the most possibly universal sense. We can debate the historicity of reason whereas I suggest, the historicity of certain values seem more evident as they are culture-based. I do not mean to reject the possibility of universal and ahistoric values or virtues. Nevertheless Kantian grounding of morality, though at first glance may seem solid and lifeless, grants sanction to morality in a powerful simplicity, in the manner that the common sense “golden rule” of conduct does. We can speak of “ancient notion of good life” and “modern notion of good life” concerning the everyday practices of each, while at the same time we may keep the belief that the essential meaning of life has always been the same<sup>166</sup>. For instance, a certain sort of behavior –let’s say a kind of bravery- could have been regarded as a virtue in a certain society at a time, and could have been fostered. In the

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<sup>165</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 79.

<sup>166</sup> If it were ever possible to talk of such an “essential” and “never changing” meaning of life –free from any arguments from relativism- , I would put forward the principle “An unexamined life is not worth living”. Nevertheless obviously there are innumerable many answers to what good life is.



development of those virtues, what is sensuous, cultural and reasonable are always intermingled. That is to say, it would be a narrower and heterogeneous perspective to prioritize virtues over rationality (duty) in grounding morality. Nevertheless, a certain conception of the good i.e. a Kantian one which entails duty, righteousness and obligation can be universally valid. Upon this extensive formal ground, it could be possible to evaluate diverse ethical contents in plurality. In short, I suggest that what is advantageous in Kantian ethics is its grounding which makes it preferable over rival perspectives. It enables us to embrace the biggest number of people in moral discussion and further can provide a moral ground for jurisprudence where a shift from good to right is necessarily needed.<sup>167</sup>

#### Further Remarks:

It seems to me, Kant gladly defines our rationality as the ground of our agency. He seems to find no other capacity capable of replacing its position. In contrast, Nietzsche regards “will” as a living force, as an undetermined and wild principle of life. I suggest, it is somehow up to us to define ourselves according to either of them. This is because, both of them are substantial claims regarding some sort of human nature. None seems to allow further explications. Therefore, on the one hand, I can apply commonsensical

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<sup>167</sup> It can be plausible to claim that ethics is not an issue to embrace a universal scale. Accordingly, one can suggest to focus on particular ethics such as; work ethics, science ethics, feminist ethics and alike. Alternatively it is also possible to regard ethics as meaningful only when it is discussed in connection with cultural or communal codes of behaviors. Nevertheless I am more sympathetic with the archaic notion of ethics which regards ethical and existential enquiry as an essential characteristic of being human. The very act of reading Aristotle, and fancying similar questions today justifies the universal perspective in ethics. At least in terms of ethical groundings and necessitating itself on us this inclusiveness is needed.

reasoning which may be more sympathetic with a Kantian ethically responsible agent. Nevertheless as this would not be a “genealogical” method, it can be rejected from Nietzsche’s perspective. On the other hand, Kantian agency can serve better for the ethical problems of everyday life. That is, it would be more pragmatic to hold the Kantian stance instead of Nietzsche’s. But still Nietzsche’s criticisms regarding the “rational self” and impossible perspective –free position (which we could not evaluate in the narrow place spared to him), are valuable to make us suspicious our arrogance with respect to our rational faculties and theories about life in general.

## Duty:

The second aspect of Kantian morality that I want to explicate in this chapter is “duty”, as the way we approach to it is crucial to be able to figure a favorable ethics of deontology. In the cores of both “duty- motivation” and “duty- eudemonia” problems lie a misrepresented notion of duty. The idea that the moral command dictates over sensuality and results a cleavage in the agent makes the ground of this mistaking.

Without a doubt, Kant places duty in the heart of his morality. For him the moral worth of an action is provided only if it is done from duty.<sup>168</sup> Accordingly duty is necessitated, that is sanctioned as a duty, from respect for the law.<sup>169</sup> Firstly, this means that law precedes the notion of duty. The “apodictic law”, the moral imperative is an *a priori* call of reason<sup>170</sup>. The moral imperative provides us with an objective principle whereas a maxim is our subjective principle of volition. Maxims mostly involve our subjective inclinations, desires and dispositions. Nevertheless the categorical imperative itself simply legislates us to “act in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law”.<sup>171</sup> A rational being with a perfect will would always have the practical law as her maxim. Therefore the categorical imperative only prescribes a criterion for our maxims – as we are imperfectly willing

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<sup>168</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 13.

<sup>169</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 16.

<sup>170</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 24.

<sup>171</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 37.

agents it becomes a law of duty for us.<sup>172</sup> At this point, what Kant asserts in the very beginning of the first section should be remembered: a “good will” is the only thing that is ever possible to be unconditionally good. The unconditional goodness necessitates that it must not be done for the sake of some ends other than itself. This leads us to the notion of duty. To summarize, in this somehow circular picture duty stands almost as an empty concept and categorical imperative does not rule in us as an external force. Actually, rather than answering “what to do”, Kantian morality focuses on “on what grounds to do”. Therefore, first it is unfair to reduce Kantian ethics into a tough prescriptivism as each and every case the moral agent is invited to reflect on her maxim which necessarily involves self-reflection.<sup>173</sup> In this self-reflection the agent is motivated by the goodness or righteousness of her maxim. This is what Kant refers as moral law itself is a moral incentive, likewise our respect for it. Once we confirm our capacity to act morally, namely the capacity to be able reflect upon the possible best way to act; it does not make sense to regard our inner moral demand (discovery) as an external and clashing power with us. Kant allows that, as metaphysics of morals exists in us “though as a rule only in an obscure way”<sup>174</sup>, for the application of this *a priori* principle we take “the particular nature of man which is only known by experience”<sup>175</sup> in to consideration. Morality then involves anthropology not as its foundation, but only

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<sup>172</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 70.

<sup>173</sup> As Korsgard suggests in her article “From Duty and for the Sake of the Noble: Kant and Aristotle on Morally Good Action”; good people reflect upon their maxims before they act. This is the definitive aspect of acting from duty unlike acting on inclinations. Therefore what make us moral is our choice; that is the maxim we reflect upon. (Korsgard, *Constitution of Agency* p.174 -205)

<sup>174</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *The Metaphysics of Morals*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991. p. 44.

<sup>175</sup> Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*. p.44.

with respect to its application principles. Therefore, morality in its application does not reveal as a discipline which is by definition in contrast to our empirical nature as Schiller seems to suggest.

This analysis provides us another insight to understand application of Kantian ethics better. Despite what Williams and MacIntyre claims, Kantian ethics cannot be reduced into stagnant rule-following. As mentioned above, the agent's retrospection is always needed to be able to talk of ethics. Secondly, the particular conditions are always taken into account to be able to apply the moral law. Therefore, in an Aristotelian sense, the agent acts on a rational principle (form of the maxim); yet the content is always provided by the given cases. Kant divides the *Metaphysics of Morals* into "Doctrine of Right" and "Doctrine of Virtue". The Doctrine of Right involves strict duties, and it can provide us precisely what to do rather than providing general directions<sup>176</sup> For example, duties of right include not to violating property rights or contractual responsibilities; these are strict or perfect duties. Nevertheless, the doctrine of virtue, in other words ethics, involves wide or imperfect duties that do not tell us what to do specifically – but merely mandate certain ends. In particular we have a duty to ourselves to promote our own perfection, and a duty to promote the happiness of other. But these wide duties do not tell us how to promote our own perfection, or whose happiness to promote or when. As a result, Kantian ethics necessitates a continuous inner questioning and seeking for truth.

But ethics, because of the latitude it allows in its imperfect duties, inevitably leads to questions that call upon judgment to decide how a maxim is to be applied in particular cases, and indeed in such a way that judgment provides

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<sup>176</sup> Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*. p.211.

another (subordinate) maxim (and one can always ask for yet another principle for applying this maxim to cases that may rise). So ethics falls into a casuistry, which has no place in the doctrine of Right.

Casuistry is, accordingly, neither a science nor a part of a science; for in that case it would be dogmatics, and casuistry is not so much a doctrine about how to find something as rather a practice in how to seek truth.<sup>177</sup>

Initiating from such a moral ground, which is not reduced into rule-following, the Kantian moral scope enables us to talk of self-reflection in each particular case without giving up the idea of universal and objective foundations. Therefore, repeatedly, it is not fair to reduce Kant's ethical system into a morbid "universalizability" and rule following. Actually, in a fair reading of Kant, it must not be located in the center of his moral thought, and it must not be regarded in isolation of all other components of Kantian ethics. Once his later ethical works are taken into consideration, Kant can be claimed to evolve his ethics into a more humane phase.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*. p.211.

<sup>178</sup> It is also possible to regard this as to distance from his initial principles regarding a proper study of metaphysics of morals. Nevertheless, Kant seems to be aware of the risk and warns the reader in the very beginning of Doctrine of Virtue:

A philosophy of any subject (a system of rational knowledge from concepts) requires a system of pure rational concepts independent of any conditions of intuition, that is, a metaphysics. The only question is whether every practical philosophy, as a doctrine of duties, and so too the doctrine of virtue (ethics), also needs metaphysical first principles, so that it can be set forth as a genuine science (systematically) and not merely as an aggregate of precepts sought out one by one (fragmentarily). No one will doubt that the pure doctrine of Right needs metaphysical first principles; for it has to do only with the formal condition of a capacity for choice that is to be limited in external relations in accordance with the laws of freedom, without regard for any end (the matter of choice). Here the doctrine of duties is, accordingly, a mere scientific doctrine.

But in this philosophy (the doctrine of virtue) it seems directly contrary to the Idea of it to go all the way back to metaphysical first principles, so as to make the concept of duty though purified of anything empirical (any feeling), the incentive. Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p.181.

Besides, such a picture does not give rise to a disharmonious split in the agency as it teaches how to will, rather than what to will.<sup>179</sup> That is, while acting, the categorical imperative does not order us what to choose but directs us on what grounds to choose. When we provide such an analysis of duty, it seems that we can respond to Hegel's criticisms in some way. First all, if we regard duty as an action done from respect for the law, it is legitimate to demand an abstraction. Otherwise, it would be impossible to talk of apodictic necessitation for moral imperative. In addition, such an abstraction does not cancel individual's self-actualization, on the contrary it licenses the authority completely to the agent herself. This is because, if we take objective institutions as the binding condition of subjective freedom; the agent is bounded by historicity and authorities other than herself. In this respect also, the Kantian moral law cannot be considered external to the agent. Besides, once we approve the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgments in Kant's metaphysics, Hegel's theft example (talking of the vice of theft before we have the notion of private property) falls irrelevant. What is defined *a priori* in the moral law is the ground of will, which does not involve any references to historical conventions.

Another error which leads to a "divided agency" interpretation is equating the maxim of action to the purpose of action.<sup>180</sup> When I prefer to visit a friend of mine in the hospital, my purpose may involve the idea of making her happy or the expectation of being visited if I were in the same situation. Kant does not try to cancel those possibilities. Nevertheless, Kantian morality demands to guarantee the moral duty to be

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<sup>179</sup> It is important to underline Stocker, Schiller and MacIntyre hold different versions of that similar argument.

<sup>180</sup> Korsgaard, Christine M. *Constitution of Agency*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. p.213.

fulfilled regardless of contingent motivations. He prioritizes moral command over sensuous motivations. That means, because I take it as a duty, I ought to legislate myself to visit my friend at hospital “even if” I do not look forward to doing so. It would be all right if I visit my friend upon the always valid objective principle of volition (i.e., CI) and as a result some of my further subjective expectations or purposes are met. Kant gives a superiority to acting from duty compared to acting in accordance with duty.<sup>181</sup> This gives rise to the caricatured criticisms regarding getting pleasure out of moral actions<sup>182</sup>. Yet it seems to me fairer to take Kant’s position as a *prioritization*, which secures a moral action from being omitted. We are required to act morally even if there is no incentive to act, other than the moral law itself. Therefore, moral responsibility is not left to contingencies of sensuous motivations.

Besides, in *Groundwork* Kant introduces actions that in accordance with duty and we have an immediate inclination towards them through our nature.<sup>183</sup> Those actions such as caring for the ones we love, are normally done for their own sakes. As we have a natural inclination towards them through sympathy; they do not serve for any other “end” other than themselves. These actions are in accordance with the law. Furthermore, – as I shall emphasize once again under the discussion of “Virtues”- such actions are necessitated by law as “duties of love”, in a “wide sense”. Nevertheless, here again, actions that are fulfilled only for the sake of duty, even if when we have no

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<sup>181</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 69.

<sup>182</sup> “Gladly I serve my friends, but alas I also do it with pleasure.  
Hence I am plagued with doubt that I am not a virtuous person.”  
“Sure, your only resource is to try to despise them entirely,  
and then with aversion to do what your duty enjoins you.”  
Schiller

<sup>183</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 13.



natural tendency towards, deserve greater moral worth. As a result; once clearly asserted how duty, maxim and incentive relates each other, no such moral schizophrenia is required.

The problem regarding the demand for impossible impartiality<sup>184</sup> also relates to the way we understand duty. In fact, Kant does not require us to leave aside all our interpersonal connections, which is impossible. Impartiality is a serious misinterpretation of Kant that can be refuted by obvious textual evidences. To begin with, in *The Doctrine of Virtue* Kant provides us clear depiction of perfect (narrow) duties and imperfect (wide) duties.

This proposition follows from the preceding one; for if the law can prescribe only the maxim of actions, not actions themselves, this is a sign that it leaves a latitude for free choice in following (complying with) the law, that is, that the law cannot specify precisely in what way one is to act and how much one is to do by the action for an end that is also a duty. But a wide duty is not to be taken as permission to make exceptions to the maxim of actions, but only as permission to limit one maxim of duty by another (e.g., love of one's neighbor in general by love of one's parents), by which in fact the field for the practice of virtue is widened. The wider the duty, therefore, the more imperfect is a man's obligation to action; as he, nevertheless, brings closer to narrow duty (duties of Right) the maxim of complying with wide duty (in his disposition), so much the more perfect is his virtuous action.<sup>185</sup>

As the above quotation suggests, especially with respect to imperfect duties, we have a wide "personal space" that we can furnish according our personal, "partial" preferences. As long as we act on right maxim, there is nothing wrong to choose our parents over our neighbors when we are fulfilling a duty in their favor.

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<sup>184</sup> Williams and MacIntyre have raised the criticisms of impossible impartiality and erroneous isolation of the individual from her social networks of affection.

<sup>185</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *The Metaphysics of Morals*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991. p. 194.

Secondly, Kant introduces the duty of beneficence. It is necessitated by universal law that we ought to be benevolent towards ourselves and towards others. This universal law implies that we should be beneficent in mutually towards each other, yet it be a self-contradiction to claim that we are capable of caring, loving others than ourselves. Therefore, in the first place, as a part of the partiality in our nature, we may legitimately prioritize ourselves towards with duties of love, beneficence and alike. Nevertheless we are also obliged to make happiness and well-beings of others as my end. At this point again, Kant underlines that without any violation of duty we can act partially according to our emotional attachments with other people.

For in wishing I can be equally benevolent to everyone, whereas in acting I can without violating the universality of the maxim, vary the degree greatly in accordance with the different objects of my love (one of whom concerns me more closely than others).<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, p.246.

### Virtue:

Kant asserts we have several natural tendencies such as beneficence, gratitude and sympathy that are also duties. He evaluates sympathy and alike as already implanted in us by nature.<sup>187</sup> Though we make use of those sensuous capacities of us while we act morally, they should not be mastering over our maxim. As autonomous moral agents, we are supposed to be involved in “a free sympathy” which is based on practical reason. In this respect also, grounding our actions only upon such irrational grounds would not secure our autonomy and fulfilment of duty in any case, at any time. Accordingly, the continuity and autonomous character of moral actions are secured only through the moral law which demands a retrospection on our maxims. That kind of a “security check” does not necessarily demand the exclusion of virtues from moral sphere. On the contrary, virtues (such as beneficence, gratitude, sympathy, avoiding avarice, servility and not defiling oneself by lust etc.) and vices (such as lying, arrogance, envy or hatred for man etc.) are involved in the Doctrine of Virtues as duties we are bound by, either towards ourselves or towards others.

Nevertheless, Kant demands us to regard “virtues” in a particular way with respect to his moral system. In that way, virtues are not regarded as the paradigm of ethics, yet “maxim” is still kept to be in the heart of ethical thought. As already mentioned in the second chapter, in several cases the demand of moral law may contradict with our immediate desires or personal deeds. Nevertheless, this is

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<sup>187</sup> Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 250.

considered to be a contradiction on the surface. This is because Kant calls moral law as the law of freedom. Moral law and our awareness of ourselves as free agents necessitate each other mutually.<sup>188</sup> Therefore it is our freedom that obliges us to act in a certain way which cannot be compared to an external constraint upon us. Moreover we are already equipped with a moral feeling which is not a mere feeling but inherent in us as a rational disposition.<sup>189</sup> Moral feeling provides to acknowledge and respect moral law. Despite all, if one still insists on the idea of a conflict arising from hegemony of our rationality over our sensuality, it can be well suggested that the very awareness of that conflict can serve as a motivation to side by the moral law. That is, since we regard ourselves as members to the realm of ends, we confirm our dignity and self-legislating autonomy.<sup>190</sup> What I call “we” here initially is our noumenal aspect, which is not a slave to the deterministic laws of phenomena. In that sense, Kant does not regard humans primarily as a part of phenomena / nature, but as active rational beings who are capable of acting upon their presupposed, noumenal freedom. As a result, we are aware that we can be free of our empirical nature through self-legislation. This awareness relates us to aesthetics in a very different way and we can appreciate moral law.<sup>191</sup> Accordingly virtue must be assessed under these premises. Kant defines virtue as follows:

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<sup>188</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 26.

<sup>189</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p.186.

<sup>190</sup> Kant, *Groundwork*, p. 51-54.

<sup>191</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000. p. 145.

Since the moral capacity to constrain oneself can be called virtue, action springing from such a disposition (respect for law) can be called virtuous (ethical) action, even though the law lays down a duty of Right; for it is the doctrine of virtue that commands us to hold the Right of men sacred.<sup>192</sup>

Initially, this implies being virtuous is placing moral law about our contingent inclinations. Though in the first place virtue appears as a constraint, as mentioned above, there are numberless virtues we are naturally sympathetic with. Nevertheless those virtues or vices are not defined “in terms of mere degree”<sup>193</sup> as in the Aristotelian “mean criterion”. Kant suggests that “without the objective principle of maxims”, virtue and vice cannot be distinguished from each other properly.

As mentioned before, *Doctrine of Virtue* deals with the matter (content) of the moral actions that refers to our ends. Accordingly, Kant goes beyond the limits of “on what grounds to do?” in certain respects and implies what ethics necessitates us to do. Within the multiplicity of virtues in terms of their different degrees of enforcement, Kant introduces a specific kind of duty which is also an end in itself: duty of virtue.<sup>194</sup> The duty to be virtuous, as Kant asserts, is neither only habituation nor a simple state of character.<sup>195</sup> As we are not holy beings, our willing is always subject to err. That is, most of the time we have other inclinations along with the call of duties of virtues in us. Therefore, even though there are several duties of reason, only the duty of being virtuous; namely the duty to hold a virtuous disposition is binding for all our actions.

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<sup>192</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p.198.

<sup>193</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p.228.

<sup>194</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p.188.

<sup>195</sup> Unlike Aristotle’s and MacIntyre notions of virtues.

For finite holy beings (who could never be tempted to violate duty) there would be no doctrine of virtue but only a doctrine of morals, since the latter is autonomy of practical reason whereas the former is also autocracy of practical reason, that is, it involves consciousness of the capacity to master one's inclinations when they rebel against the law, a capacity which, though not directly perceived, is yet rightly inferred from the moral categorical imperative. Thus human morality in its highest stage can be still nothing more than virtue, even if it be entirely pure (quite free from the influence of any incentive other than that of duty). In its highest stage it is an ideal (to which one must continually approximate), which is commonly personified poetically by the sage.<sup>196</sup>

Kant, very elegantly invites virtue to participate in his moral philosophy in the highest position. The way he involves virtue in his moral thought seems to provide a much secure place than the Aristotelian notion of virtue. Even though, virtuous actions that are determined by “mean” can be copied by non-virtuous people; a maxim, which is the subjective principle of acting, belongs to agent internally and inaccessible by others. As the quotation suggests, autocracy of reason demands that we act virtuously, and this is not a simply particular actions-based demand. It demands us to be always ready; firstly to reflect upon our maxims, secondly to side by morality even if it clashes with our immediate satisfaction. It anticipates a perfection, or holiness that we are supposed to approach.

In addition, Kant also suggests that it is again our duty to perfect ourselves. In contrast to the unfair equation between Kantian morality and rule following; Kant claims that morality obliges us to flourish ourselves. We ought to cultivate our “natural dispositions or capacities”, besides our inner states to harmonize with virtues.<sup>197</sup> As this

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<sup>196</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p.188-189.

<sup>197</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p.192..

is a wide duty, we are again “free” to determine the concrete ways to seek perfection. Our rational reflection can tell us what sort of life we would like to lead, and what powers we need to achieve it. “Perfection can remain a progress only, as an end”<sup>198</sup> since we are capable of achieving the best at a given time. Then what is praiseworthy here, can only be our strive for perfection. Therefore; “Virtue is always in progress and yet always start from the beginning. It is always in progress because, considered objectively, it is an ideal and unattainable, while yet constant approximation to it is a duty”.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p.240.

<sup>199</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p.209..

### Happiness:

It seems evident that perfection as duty implies happiness. This is because, we ought to strive, on the one hand for a practical perfection; i.e. to harmonize our particular ends with duty. On the other hand, we ought to improve all our capacities, and diminish our ignorance. As a result, duty of perfection also helps to clarify the mistaken clash between happiness and morality in Kantian ethics.

But this distinction of the principle of happiness from that of morality is not, for this reason, at once an opposition between them, and pure practical reason does not require that one should renounce claims to happiness but only that as soon as duty is in question one should take no account of them. It can even in certain respects be a duty to attend to one's happiness partly because happiness (to which belong skill, health, wealth) contains means for the fulfillment of one's duty and partly because lack of it (e.g., poverty) contains temptations to transgress one's duty.<sup>200</sup>

Kant also suggests that it is also a duty to contribute to the happiness of others.

Therefore, he somehow provides an argument for us to defend him against the charge of moral atomism. Moral agents are supposed to regard themselves as legislating members of an intelligible realm. Beyond this "formal" necessitation, the duty to promote happiness of others along with promoting our own happiness, provides a material content of morality in our social interactions.<sup>201</sup>

All these considered, Kant seems to envisage an ethical agent who seeks for a harmony with respect to herself and others. Therefore, it would be wrong to assume that Kantian

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<sup>200</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, p. 78- 79.

<sup>201</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p.192.



ethics leads to a psychologically and socially broken agency who is in a never ending combat. On the contrary, once we regard all components of his ethical thought in unity; we can claim that Kant considers the moral agent as someone who reflects upon her maxims and capable of correcting them. A moral agent takes it as a duty to improve her character in such a way that, the commands of morality causes less and less clashes in her. On the one hand she tries to perfect her natural dispositions, on the other hand she cultivates herself that her particular ends do not conflict with duty. Therefore, she may have somber or cheerful moment; yet she continuously involves in a retrospection and self-awareness which makes her a free, autonomous moral agent.

Ethical gymnastics, therefore, consists only in combating natural impulses sufficiently to be able to master them when a situation comes up in which they threaten morality; hence it makes one valiant and cheerful in the consciousness of one's restored freedom. To repent of something and to impose a penance on oneself (such as a fast) not for hygienic but for pious considerations are, morally speaking, two very different precautionary measures. To repent of a past transgression when one recalls it is unavoidable and, in fact, it is even a duty not to let this recollection disappears; but doing penance, which is cheerless, gloomy and sullen, makes virtue itself hated and drives adherents away from it. Hence the training (discipline) that a man practices on himself can become meritorious and exemplary only through the cheerfulness that accompanies it.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p.274.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

In this study I want to suggest that we can think of Kantian morality as a certain type virtue ethics. There are several merits we usually associate with virtue ethics such as retrospection, authenticity and human flourishing. On the other hand, there is a tendency to regard Kantian morality as a lifeless rule-following, leaving no space for personal questioning and development. Nevertheless, a closer reading of Kantian morals falsifies this prejudice. As it is discussed; first of all, once we regard our rationality as the essential property of us; it is legitimate to require its dominance over other faculties of us. Secondly, Kantian critique of reason equips us with an active and resourceful rationality. Accordingly, we can suggest that reason is also active in practical sphere and it can determine the will. In addition, morality, i.e. moral law, is innate to us that we do not need to philosophize over morals to be an ethical agent. Morality is a natural disposition and commonsensically ready in all of us. As I discussed, a true explication of duty can free deontological ethics from several accusations. That is, duty is what we necessitate to ourselves, and it does not refer the obligations that are fundamentality contrasting our nature. We have several duties that we have as a result of our empirical nature. It is again meaningless to claim that, Kantian ethics excludes moral values and conditions of human flourishing from ethical discussion. Under the light of given

arguments; I claim that it is possible to consider ethics of deontology as compatible with authenticity, perfection and constant self-retrospection.

The problem of grounding any ethical thought inescapably rests upon the determining its foundational premises. Even a moral sentimentalist or more roughly an ethical particularist has to move from certain assumptions regarding human nature or the capacities that we have. Therefore, it seems to me that the premises or postulates that we prefer to start off our ethical questioning make a big part of constituting ourselves as agents. In several different cases the distinct assumptions of “humans are essentially rational beings whose rational activities are evident to themselves” or “humans are essentially sentimental beings capable of a limited access to their rational capacities” may seem more valid than the other. Therefore through preferring to center our moral thought at a specific “black spot”, where no more answers or chains of questions are available, we not only build up what we mean by “we”; but also we actualize that “we” via our free will. Correspondingly, that is the point where we prefer to be who we are and free will of the human agency reveals itself.

Even though the rigid crust of Kantian moral system makes it seem unappealing to eat; the core that can be reached through certain processes of stripping, is worthy of the effort paid. First of all, it provides a vast and sound ground against the challenges by any sorts of moral relativism. This does not necessarily imply that in each and every case we can agree absolutely with the Kantian definition of agency. This is already falsified in practice. Nevertheless, holding such a kind of an agency supposition in the initial ground of our debates, at least makes our very effort of debating or

communicating meaningful. We can still save our right to err, to hesitate or disagree in ultimately diverse cases of everyday life. It seems to me plausible -not very utopian, to read Kantian moral core as preferring a certain ratio-aesthetic capacity of ours – appreciation of moral law within us- to domain other less noble ones. This does not necessarily presuppose one’s cancelling her emotive capacities altogether.

Secondly, all theory-opposing philosophies in some sense owe their existence to the theories they try to refute in several ways. Every effort of deconstruction necessitates *a priori* construction. It is valuable to be critical, and it is fruitful to suspect dehumanizing and over-reducing character of theorizing or systematizing. Nonetheless, it seems to me, to a certain extent, this is an inescapable element of prose. In several cases, the initial concern to theorize may be simply to simplify the issue at hand; yet in most cases they may end up with trying to huddle too many things in the narrow space of the idealized system. Kant also can be criticized for being seduced by the charm of systematizing or symmetry. Obviously, he forces certain concepts; e.g. friendship and marriage, to fit into his moral system. Consequently, the spirit of these terms seem to be lost in the rigidity of a system which does not allow gaps and blurred spots. If Kant had been more generous about granting that practical reason exceeds the limits of theoretical account, more flexibility and humility could prevail his moral thought. This is because, on the one side he affirms the ultimate unanalyzability of some terms –as they exceed speculative sphere-; on the other side, he carries an investigation which is not very humble with respect to its transparent access claim to reason as whole. While Kant arms practical reason with several armors, he deprives it from the capacity of an insight to manage exceptional crisis; which cannot be an object of our investigation. The clearest

example for this is Kant's inhumane rigidness about lying. It is not acceptable to agree with the legitimacy of telling someone's hiding place to a murderer who seeks her. Even if this could be legitimate, it cannot be ethical. In this respect the ethical sphere claims much more space than the straightforward theorization allows. In certain moments, moral agents should be allowed for "leaps" beyond the rational doctrine which –I think- seems to be necessitated by the very nature of practical reason itself. And those moments are saved to be given an account theoretically. The essence of this paradoxical suggestion of mine lies in Kant's assumption that even the Highest Good, God, is bound by the rational law. Even if this makes sense regarding the teleological unity of everything, this approach somehow limits and surrounds the idea of deity. It pushes us to envisage a manlike deity. Even though Kant argues against dogmatic anthropomorphism in his early works, this "binding rationality" seems to result in a more and more passivated idea of deity in the course of his history of thought.<sup>203</sup>

Although we may keep the grounding principle of moral worth, -to act from duty-, at certain moments that may not be readily evident as Kant tries to systematize and over simplify. Therefore rather than a manlike god, who is without any exception always and completely bound by rationality; a godlike conception of man, who is not absolutely determinable in his principles of acting, would enable us to allow ambiguities. These ambiguities may provide to treat man in a more humble way with respect to deity; however these ambiguities also attribute a more enigmatic and divine status to man with respect to his own access to his rationality.

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<sup>203</sup> Pomerleau, Wayne P. "Immanuel Kant: *Philosophy of Religion*", Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/kant-rel/>

Nevertheless, out of this rare parenthesis of paradoxes, life on earth demands the moral truths of the 'ought's way much more often than that. Referring to our common-sensical practical capacity, we can immediately intuit that "We shouldn't lie" just because it is a duty not to lie. As a result the widest portion of moral philosophy can find its correspondence in the Kantian ground of rationality. It is not the principles but the exceptional dilemmas that shatter the boundaries of moral theories. Accordingly it must be legitimate, and it is crucial I think- to reflect upon universal and objective principles of morality. What is illegitimate would be to claim a moral theory to answer any moral dilemma consistently and objectively.

Accordingly as I tried to state in the scope of this study, it is still plausible to follow a reading of Kant which enables us not to give up particular merits of virtue ethics. Even Stocker, one of the strict critics of Kant admits that, the Kantian ethics can depict several moral facts far better than Aristotelian ethics simply because of its broad scope. Modern philosopher Kant had to deal with several issues such as peace, health, sufficient food, security and many other main constituents of just and effective legal and commercial systems which naturally would distance him to an emotive perspective.<sup>204</sup> Therefore referring to Kantian fertile ground of reason still can help us to the deal with the practical challenges of the contemporary agent.

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<sup>204</sup> Stocker, *Valuing Emotions*, p. 181.

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