



The Formulations in Metaphysics of Morals

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Abstract

The concept 'Morality' is the source of intuition and comes to us as a form of 'Categorical Imperative'. Morality is a judgement related to a piece of action. Pure Reason transforms into practical reason. The Pure reason or conscience is the key factor of morality which turned into Imperative. It is the maxim upon which one works, the principle of what ought to do? 'Duty for duty's sake'. As morality expresses laws of freedom, its nature is intuitive. Experience cannot by itself answer our factual questions, it's only the way through which we contact the facts. Pure reason is transcendental which transcends reason, then proceeds to understanding and ends in action. Only a perfect rational being can follow morality, he knows what ought to be? The universal idea that behaves alike is followed by the law of nature. It's an obligation without any sympathy and purpose, a humanity that requires autonomy to realize the supreme principle.

Keynotes: Reason, Motive, Judgements, Imperative, Intuition, Maxim, Universal-Law, Autonomy, Freedom, Humanity

Introduction

Every event is the product of a cause that was disagreed by empiricists and also physicists. The empiricists of that period had strongly raised the voice that human knowledge including our moral knowledge are only the product of sensation. On the other side, the extreme rationalists, believed that true ideas could be derived only from the self-evident rational principles. The truths which are very traditional beliefs such as 'God's existence', 'the immortality of soul', and about 'what ought to do' are self-evident can empirically proved?. David Hume, the Scottish philosopher, the British empiricist who vehemently criticized the rationalists and rejected their views. Hume strongly suggested that the sense experience is the only way to know the world and the existence of other things. By the way of discussion, Hume also opposed the idea of morality as innate, the product of reason. He raises questions like, 'How Ought will be derived from Is?'. There is no necessary connection between cause and effect. Is it necessarily true that where there is an event there is a cause? The Newtonian system of nature has no justification for every event has a cause. For Hume, the causal principle is a product of our own mental process that becomes sense impressions when we observe regularly co-joined events. Morality is a psychological disposition, a mental phenomena, a matter of approval or disapproval of our attitudes.

The conflict between the rationalists' thought and empiricists' understanding created tension among the intellectuals. In that crucial time Kant's philosophy had been treated as a high pain killer. He made the synthesis between two different cultures and changed the system of philosophy. Kant had realized the strength of the empiricist's who were regularly claiming that the empirical experiences are the only matter of all our beliefs and that sceptical conclusions cannot be justified. In the same way he rejects the rationalists' claim about truths of facts which do not exist and can be proved only through reason. Kant's system can be compared with Copernicus,

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whose explanation was the ordering of the heavens by changing the earth revolving around the sun, where the sun is the centre of the ordering heavens.

Kant divided philosophy into Metaphysics; the laws of nature or physical world, Logic; the laws of thought or reason, and Ethics; the laws of freedom or free will. In 'Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals', his focus was the certainty of moral principle and its origination. To prove the certainty of morality, he claimed that the world generally works as per a law i.e, every event followed by a cause, this is the truth of physics or law of nature. We have a body of knowledge that is synthetic a priori. Morality, the object of ethics, is concerned with practical questions like 'what ought to be'? Experience cannot by itself answer our factual questions, it's only the way through which we contact the facts. Kant concludes moral judgements must be apriori. The preliminary and fundamental point of 'Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals' is the establishment of the supreme principle of morality, and later he calls that supreme principle 'maxim', takes place in the form of the command that becomes a domain of law to control our conduct or character. The universal principle that takes the form of moral conduct. We act as per those laws of thought. Kant divided maxim into material maxim and formal maxim. A material maxim always tries to generalize a particular motive and result, i.e if we need good health, we have to follow certain kinds of biological restrictions and habits such as exercise, hygienic and proper diet, free from tension and rest also. These are the basic criteria to achieve good health, material maxim is hypothetical in nature, its hypothetical imperative. Material maxim or hypothetical imperative divided into 'problematic or technical' and 'assertoric or pragmatic'. The problematic imperatives tell us how to achieve some specific end we must do i.e, you might have. To solve the problems what techniques we have to apply. On the other hand assertoric or pragmatic imperatives are practical and what is needed to do in the present scenario to attain an end that you have to do. Formal maxim is completely opposite of material maxim, an unconditional principle and immaterial in nature. It's a command, an universal idea only follows obligations. Kant's moral principle is categorical, never expressed for any ends.

When a thing and its quality is expressed in propositions, Kant calls this as judgement. The propositions and judgements are interchangeable. He takes judgements are the basic unit of human knowledge. The two elements of judgements are concepts and objects. Kant employed judgements to establish the certainty of morality. A judgement plays an important role in the reality of something that may be true or false. Analytic judgement is true and universal in nature in which the predicate says nothing new about the subject. but in synthetic judgement predicate says something new. Analytic judgements or propositions are not a product of human experience, whereas synthetic judgments are completely based on human experience. The concept morality is apriori but its judgements are synthetic. It was a challenge for kant: are synthetic a priori judgements possible?

Kant recognised that Hume's theory of causation and causal principle has no ground is unjustifiable. In order to establish the possibility of metaethics, Kant tried to examine the structure of human experience. The moral knowledge or morality is a subjective experience that is the product of external entities due to the sense organs. Kant argues that knowledge of any kind begins with sense experience, proceeds to understanding, and ends in reason. Like knowledge, he also strongly believed that



morality or moral knowledge also follows the same procedure. Whatever received by sense perception becomes knowledge only by certain formal principles of understanding. Sense perceptions are always passive, succeeded by the activity of the human mind. For Kant, sensibility supplies data to the mind in the presence of intuition and that faculty of intuition are always sensory.

Kant's terminology intuitions are always sensory and moral knowledge is completely based on intuition. morality or moral knowledge is intuitive knowledge. It is true that knowledge begins with perception, proceeds to understanding and ends in reason. Again Kant says our reason has certain limitations, beyond that there is something what he calls transcendental, because Kant was a transcendental idealist. That transcendental transcends in human reason, then proceeds to understanding and further reflex in action. We have two types of reason; theoretical reason and practical reason. Ethics is practical and related to a piece of action. He believes morality, a pure concept, is the subject matter of twelve categories. These categories are apriori.

In Kant's understanding, the action is moral when those are done without any hesitation or in favour of propensity. Morality has no place of sympathy and inclination. The moral value of any action never demands if then... condition. There is no question of any selfish ends. Morality is a principle that rests upon a 'maxim' where the agent acts when that supporter takes the decision to help others because by helping he enjoys something. A dutiful and perfect rational being only follows that 'maxim' or moral principle to help others to show a need. "All our inclination is nothing but the representation of appearance. The things we intuit are not in themselves what we intuit them as being. Nor are their relations so constituted in themselves as they appear to us. As appearances they cannot exist in themselves and apart from all this receptivity of our sensibility remains completely unknown to us"¹.

The basic ground of the 'Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals and Critique of Practical Reason' is metaphysics through which morality can be discussed. The nature of causality implies a physical determinism which is universal. All human activities are considered as spontaneous phenomena that are a matter of causation connected with other parts of nature. Kant believes that all human beings are independent and have responsibility for their activities. Kant again argues that freedom is the foundation of morality. That is the freedom of will. Freedom is an idea of reason and completely differs from choice and preferences. There is no moral credit if that is preferred. It is the principle of what we are, not what we want or desire. There is no place for material desires in morality. To make categorical imperative more strong, he prefers the formulations. For Kant, formulations are authentic and reliable sources can establish a concrete conclusion.

The Universal Law / The Formulation of Universal Law

"Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time that it should become a universal law."²

1 Paton .H.J,I Kant The Moral law: Ground Of Metaphysics of Morals, Hutchinson's University Library,London:2007, p.55

2 Paton .H.J,I Kant The Moral law: Ground Of Metaphysics of Morals, Hutchinson's University Library,London:2007, p.98



The formulation of universal law develops the categorical imperative. According to Kant, this formulation states that all humans, in all places and in all time are bound to act on that moral principle. This maxim is an imperative which commands to all human beings, they can consistently follow universal laws. This universal law is a command which instructs to perform in obedience with the principle law. It can be understood in another sense that one should to perform his duty in accordance with the law. Kant expresses that only categorical imperative or formal maxim that offers us to act the action which is virtuous? when that command to perform any action never becomes a means for some end or to getting pleasure of some particular desire. The very rational agent is one who would perform the action which is good in itself, and our reason should have brimful command over our sensations. While Kant was touching on 'categorical imperative' and highlights that this is only an imperative which comes to his brain is the fundamental truth of all particulars. The nature of hypothetical imperatives are if you desire for any material end, you are bound to follow the way or means. In the opposite principle of categorical imperatives are acquire from universal law.

The Law of Nature/The Formulation of Law of Nature

“Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature”³

The formula of law of nature is especially concerned with cause and effect. When Kant asks us about the role of 'maxims', he clarified that the laws of nature is purposive under a teleological law and that teleological law works under the guidance of maxim. Kant prefers that physical world including nature and human nature are teleologic. further he calls a nature and human nature are mere mechanism. According to Kant, a virtuous man is one who acts beyond selfish-interest and desires. If his actions are in accordance with the objective principle then that is reasonable for human society as well as for himself/herself. So, Kant has particularized a few duties, into perfect and imperfect duties following traditional division towards self. There is no deviation of the virtuous duty in the interest of inclination, If someone takes monetary help from others and keeping in mind that we are unable to return back. Sometimes, even many cases it has been observed that we want to commit suicide though we have a strong inclination to do so, but its not the right way to do so. Some cases, we make a false promise in order to get money, nor are we allowed to give loan to one and not to other. Here, we debt someone to whom we love more and refuse to the another because we have no good relation with that person. An imperfect duty, usually keeps a certain interest of inclination. we adopt the maximum of developing our talents by imperfect duty. It has been already in our mind that to whom we will extending our helping hand is decided carelessly. According to Kant, that the responsibilities towards own self is a natural activity and have significance in life. A virtuous duty never harmful in case of duties towards himself or herself. The virtuous and positive duty towards others only create a systematic harmony among men.

3 Ibid.p.30



The Law of Autonomy/The Formulation of Law of Autonomy

“So act that your will can regard itself at the same time as making universal law through its maxim”⁴

The formula of universal law represents itself through the formula of autonomy. This formulation says that categorical imperative can be grounded only by a rational agent, and when we are bound to obey that law must be a product of our will because we are rational agents. So, the law of autonomy rests in every rational beings ‘idea of will’ which makes a universal law. According to Kant this formulation is not an imperative, as other formulations are the subject matter of commands. It states that act in such a way that your maxims could be a legislator of universal laws. However, in this case we focus on our status as universal law givers rather than that universal law followers. This formulation establishes the very dignity of humanity. A rational will is a universal law are bounded by the natural and non-natural motives, such as self-interest. If any human being who is interested to be an administrator of universal law, he must be set a side to the fortuitous attitudes. Hence, we need this formulation to confirm our behaviour to the principle with the rational will, then only its status would be the source of the very law of autonomy.

The categorical imperative above our selfish choice and desires. The formulation of autonomy has clear expressed only when we conceive our wills for making its own law. Our understanding has an ability; how an imperative could be excluded from personal interest. According to Kant while philosophers try to explain moral obligation by any kind of interest that does not fulfil the criteria of a categorical imperative. The categorical imperative only says about virtuous duty a product of autonomy.

The Formulation of Kingdom of Ends

“So act as if you were through your maxim a lawmaking member of a kingdom of ends”⁵

The formulation of autonomy creates the formula of kingdom of ends. As long as the rational beings are dependent on universal laws which they themselves make, they constitute a kingdom. So far these laws put up them to treat each others ends in themselves, all rational will’s are closely connected to one another in a systematic union of different rational beings under a common law or ‘Kingdom of ends’. The only rational being who himself a member of that kingdom follows universal law and works by the maxims of his will. At the same time he judges himself and sincerely connected himself or herself as a member of that kingdom of ends. After being part of the law every rational being behaves others not as means, but always they feel themselves as an end. in this manner , a systematic union arises among the rational beings which becomes an objective law, i.e, the law of kingdom of ends . As a member of kingdom his or her ultimate end is to go with the universal laws. Those who are law making member’s of that kingdom of ends his dignity is intrinsic, unconditional and incomparable in nature. here dignity means value may both material or internal value. The moral law also has a dignity that's why that is

4 Ibid,p.34

5 Ibid.p.112



universal. The value of something may change place to place in accordance with time but morality, virtue and humanity values are incomparable with things having an economic value, i.e market value, and fancy value. The formulations suggests that, one must act in accordance with the maxim like a rational agent works in the kingdom of ends because he comes under universal law. A member should confirm his action as a maximum follower of the law, that the universal law should binding all rational beings will including themselves, like the other members maintain a status in the kingdom of ends as a legislator strictly follows the universal moral laws. This is an intuitive idea that our fundamental moral duties of our rational community will participate in an equal way in legislating these principles for their community.”

The Formulation of Humanity

“Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, where your own person or in the person of any other , never simply as means ,but always at the same time as an end”⁶

The law of humanity discusses about the actions which are secondary in characteristics . When we a perform any rational action for end that needs a principle. This is material end, and the material ends are the subject matter of hypothetical commands. The hypothetical or material imperatives values are relative and subject to condition. But, on the other side, in case of formal ends are absolute and unconditioned are the inner product of human reason. The objective ends are never created by of human actions, because those are absolute and unconditioned values. As the hypothetical imperatives produce subjective ends, in the same way the absolute and unconditioned objective ends are grounded with categorical imperatives. Only a rational being can be an a follower of that. It has been wrongly percepts that rational agents are simply as means to an end because the rational agent's values are relative, and subject to condition. That's why there would be no unconditional good, no universal principle of action, no categorical imperative. The man who intentionally makes a false promise to others no doubt he is goes against the supreme principle. Here the action done by the person has a material target in his mind. So he does not share means to an end. By the help of such a false promise to seek her own purpose he cannot be the part of virtuous end because the way he adopted will not be supported by the principle of humanity.

Kant's morality is something different from other philosophers' perspectives. As a strong believer of morality he tried to make a clear distinction between what is ordinary way of thinking of morality and what is the principle of morality ? Human mind can think or imagine in his own way that may not be the exact idea of moral principle. We have to discover the principle of morality not by ordinary way of thinking but by proper analysis. Kant was trying to identify what that moral principle is ? For Kant, moral actions value a special kind of good that differs from ordinary way of thinking of morality. Only a good will is morally good which is unconditional. The person who works with the right reason only reveals a ‘good will’. The ‘good will’ is good through its willingness. This is a special kind of value. Not only the ‘good will’ unconditional but there are also a number of things such as health, happiness, and peace that have unconditional value for their own sake. The ‘freedom’

6 Op.cit.92



and 'freedom of will' are very essence for all rational beings. In general, freedom means the preference, choice to attain or doing something. but freedom of will in Kant's perspective; 'what we are', if we desire something there is no credit of freedom. The freedom of will is a special kind of causality that carries human beings towards natural necessity, an efficient cause through which every effect and causal actions take place. It's a living force, the property of all rational beings. The freedom of will is the whole structure and keystone of our pure reason. Again reason can be divided into theoretical and practical. Theoretical reason is an understanding and practical reason is agents performance. Theoretical reason is normative and prescriptive whereas the practical reason is descriptive and cognitive. Only a perfect rational being knows what is freedom and the nature of morality. Only a perfect rational being acts as per that maxim, i.e he prefers to act as per that maxim. Therefore, a moral personality is a rational being's freedom under a moral law.

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