

Kant's Thoughts on Morality and Happiness

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Abstract

Morality makes the rational ontology and happiness make the perceptual phenomenon world, both of which have different qualitative regulation due to the binary world and human's duality, which leads to the opposition and conflict. In order to solve the conflict between them, realizing reunification, namely "good", Kant puts forward the famous "immortal soul" and "God exists" suspension set.

Key words: Kant; Morality; Happiness; Good

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INTRODUCTION

As a German philosopher, Immanuel Kant is widely considered to be a central figure in modern philosophy. His philosophical creation is called "Copernican Revolution, which is considered as the most original contribution to philosophy. To Kant, the representation makes the object possible while the object can't makes the representation possible. This concept made us become aware of the fact that the human mind is not just a passive recipient of perception but an active originator of experience. The mind could be a *tabula rasa*, a "blank tablet," or just a bathtub, which is composed of silicon chips. Perceptual input must be *processed*, or it would just be noise.

To Kant, human experience is guided by some basic concepts, and that reason is the source of morality. *Critique of Pure Reason (Kritik der reinen Vernunft)*, is Kant's major work. It was published in 1781. In *Critique of Pure Reason (Kritik der reinen Vernunft)*, Kant discussed the relationship between reason and human experience. His ambition was to move beyond what he took to be failures of traditional philosophy and metaphysics.

He didn't accept the skepticism of thinkers such as David Hume, and he tried to get rid of what he considered an era of futile and speculative theories of human experience, Kant argues that the necessary features of our minds lead to the creation of our experiences. In his view, human's experience are shaped and structured by the mind shapes. As a result, on an abstract level, all human experience has some similar basic structural characteristics. Kant argues that all human experience is based on space and time, and our concepts of cause and effect are also based on space and time.

This view leads to the following consequence: We can never have *direct* experience of things. It is a phenomenal world that is only conveyed by our senses. Kant's views upon the subject-object problem is where we can find these claims.

Besides *Critique of Pure Reason (Kritik der reinen Vernunft)*, Kant published other important works. They all discuss the subjects on ethics, religion, law, aesthetics, astronomy, and history. The *Critique of Practical Reason (Kritik der praktischen Vernunft)* was published in 1788; The *Metaphysics of Morals (Die Metaphysik der Sitten)* was published in 1797, which dealt with ethics; The *Critique of Judgment (Kritik der Urteilskraft)* was published in 1790, which focuses on aesthetics and teleology. In these great works, Kant aimed to resolve disputes between empirical and rationalist approaches. According to empiricism, all knowledge comes through experience. However, the

rationalists argue that reason and innate ideas were prior. Kant claimed that experience is purely subjective without first being processed by pure reason. If we use reason and don't apply the reason to experience, we can only come up with theoretical illusions. We should use reason freely and properly.

Kant ended the debate between the rationalists and empiricists. And his ideas influenced many thinkers in Germany during his lifetime. He is considered as a major figure in the history and development of philosophy. His thought continues to have a major influence in the fields of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, political philosophy, and aesthetics.

1. THE CONFLICT BETWEEN MORALITY AND HAPPINESS

Morality and happiness are not always consistent, and often conflict between them. The man with morality is not happy, even painful while some are rich in material life and spiritual life are but not necessarily good. According to Kant, conflict exists, and has a certain theoretical roots.

He sets off from his transcendental philosophy, trying to give answer from the philosophy level. Kant's moral philosophy is based on the duality of the world and people from all over the world to conduct research. He believes, the theoretical root lies in the duality of the world and people all over the world, leading to the perceptual and the rational, nature and the incommensurability of freedom. The first is the issue of binary world. Kant divides the world into two, namely the phenomenon of the world and the self of the world. The second is the duality problem. According to Kant, the person has the duality, on the one hand. It is emotional animal in the world of phenomenon. It is limited and not fully. It has to obey the laws of nature, and is governed by the laws of nature.

In Kant's view, the premise of morality is freedom. People have the freedom with free will be able to get rid of the bondage of natural inevitability and restriction, and go to the pursuit of his ideal. Man is therefore as a kind of ontology, who can have self-realization and creation. According to the idea of moral decision, he can decide what should do, and how to do it. When we think of ourselves as a kind of ontology, we should be responsible for the consequences of our actions and take care of moral responsibility.

When we have freedom with free will, we are a person in the real sense. Because of free will,

it requires we should consistently use the rationality without the perceptual interference. And it makes rational itself has all the dignity beyond the perceptual desire. Therefore, it's freedom is consistent and real eternal. It embodies the basic dignity of the person's behavior. (Deng, 2004)

Kant argues that freedom is the premise of all ethical morality. "Only free man has morality" (Kant, 1957, p.61) "We must assume that there is an ability which can get rid of the perceptual world and determine the ability of his will on the basis of the rational world rule, the so-called freedom." (Kant, 1961, p.135) This is the highest practical rational criticism.

Only one, who lives in the binary world and has the dual personality of the individual, has the moral problems. The conflict and unity between freedom and nature constitute the fundamental nature of the main moral body. Kant proceeds to the thinking about the problems of good will.

The will is a kind of self regulation ability which regulates the ability of own behavior according to certain rules. It is only rational that has this ability. Every thing in Nature is under the action of regular and activities. Only rational person has the ability to act according to the understanding of law and, or only a person has a will. (Jin, 2005, p.58)

The will is a distinct ability of Man, which can get rid of human perceptual desire and personal interests. It has a purposeful choice under the rational control. In practice, it is the necessity of universal, which is good.

Happiness is a kind of life ideal with which everyone is born. All have the happiness of life, which is also a good. However, if the happiness is built on the pain of others, by robbing others' property to satisfy their own desires, this sort of happiness is a kind of evil. So, all our actions are based on good will, and satisfy the requirements of moral principles and requirements. It can only say it is a good behavior.

Kant emphasize a kind of will as the premise and good will to affect our mind, and guide our actions. However, Kant argues that morality is not for the purpose of happiness, but people of virtue and morality should not always suffer. They don't go for the happiness of the individual, but should be "worthy of happiness." This "worthy of happiness" is the requirements for the confrontation and compromise between morality and happiness. So Kant tries to solve the conflict between morality and happiness, make up the contradiction between them. This is the so-called "goodness", namely, a consistency between morality and happiness. It is the pursuit of the highest goal of moral life. However, there are two cases in real life: One is to seek a happy life as a moral motivation or purpose; another is the thought the moral behavior can bring happiness and joy in life. According to Kant both cases are impossible. In the first circumstance, one can't seek a happy life as moral motives. This kind of behavior is completely immoral, and it cannot become the basis of morality; the second case is not in conformity with the moral principles, arguing that morality can bring happiness. As we know, all the causal chains which exist in the world do not depend on the will of our desires, but is based on the ability and the law of nature. We can't expect to strictly abide by the provisions of the moral law and requirements that can make the unity

of morality and happiness, so it is absolutely impossible. Two cases eventually won't make good morality and happiness together.

If so, the opposition between morality and happiness in life is impossible to achieve complete reunification. How to solve the unification of morality and happiness? This is the main problem which Kant's theory of "goodness" aims to solve.

2. THE UNITY OF MORALITY AND HAPPINESS

"Good," in Kant's view, is "the unconditional totality of the subject of pure practical reason." (Kant, 1960, p.111) And put it apart from the experience of all things based on the natural desire restriction, then the good is divided into two kinds: One kind is the highest goodness, another is a full goodness. The former involves the ultimate goal of the ontology world, namely the morality; the latter is the highest goal of the phenomenon world, namely, the pursuit of happiness. As a factor in good in terms of morality, although there is a moral man, who should be "worthy" of happiness, this is the highest condition of individual happiness. However, only morality cannot be regarded as a kind of full good. It is only considered to be a qualified condition and requirement for the happiness only. People with morality have no blessing to enjoy, even living in pain. Even if his life strictly abides by the provisions of the moral law, the moral is flawed and incomplete, which can't offer people better guidance in action. So only on the basis of morality and happiness can it make people see hope, and it can become the highest fulfillment of good. For the good, on the other hand, another factor in terms of happiness is, although happiness is what each individual wants to have, if only happiness without corresponding morality, it's not real happiness, and the happiness is not the supreme happiness of life. The happiness without the control of morality cannot become the norm in people's life, and this type of happiness should be removed, or it will affect people in the pursuit of the real happy life. Happiness can be seen as a good to achieve or the realization of one's goals, but one's happiness tends to be selfish and subjective. It is only by individual hobby or interest to act, and it often conflicts with the happiness of others, forming sharp opposition to any unfortunate results. Only through rational thinking can a universal ethics be formed, which can be abided by everybody. This is what Kant calls rational innate moral law, which is, "no matter what you do, the rule your will follows is the law that also can be a universal legislature principle." (Kant, 1961, p.20) Only on the basis of happiness, combined with the moral, can it constitute a so-called great perfect good. This shows "highest good" means that it itself is not subject to restriction. As a source of good, it constitutes the highest limit of the pursuit happiness, it is also the only condition we obtain happiness.

The most perfect good" refers to all of the good, that is completely good, above which it no longer has a greater good. It is not one of the same kind of all the parts, but as one of the most perfect and most complete all of the good. (Lin, 2005, p.187)

The concept of good contains two inseparable factors: morality and happiness. First, Kant reveals the contradiction between morality and happiness, and then points out the necessity of combination in good, and then solves antagonistic contradictions between the two. This leads to the consolidation of the concept of good, thus forming the main task of the Kant's rational criticism in practice. Based on this, Kant also makes comparison and contrast study on Epicurus school and the Stoics of ancient Greece. Epicurus school thinks that happiness is a kind of good, moral knowledge is the way by which we acquire happiness. The concept of virtue is included in the concept of happiness. While the Stoics holds the opposite view. They think only the highest virtue is good. Happiness is only a subjective level consciousness. The concept of happiness covers under the rule of virtue, and virtue is happiness. Kant thinks both views are wrong, because both "the pursuit of happiness of desire is the motivation of rule of virtue" and "rule of virtue is an effective cause of the pursuit of happiness" can't hold water in principle, which can't make the integration of morality and happiness good.

In Kant's view, happiness is actually something that belongs to the world of experience. It is based on perceptual experience, and obeys the rule of the kingdom of nature. As the perceptual existence, therefore, in order to its own survival and development to the pursuit of happiness, it is necessary to follow natural law. On the other hand, Man is a rational existence. Reason distinguishes man from the beast, and it also makes people know the natural law to consider their own fortunes. The higher purpose of rational, however, makes the person come out of the perceptual world, giving a person with a higher dignity and value. Man is a perceptual existence and a rational existence as well, which means that the moral law of practical reason must infiltrate the perceptual experience. However, Practical Reason has to take care of the fact that Man is a perceptual existence.

On the one hand, it is needed to restrict people's natural desire. On the other hand, it should take care of people's natural desire, namely, the pursuit of happiness. As a result, nature creates the antinomy of happiness and morality. From the consistency of virtue and happiness, the pure practical reason requirements, Kant raises the two "suspending hypotheses": the immortal soul and the God. These are two hypotheses that are based on free will. "Free will" ensures that everyone is born equal. Each free will, which has a rational existence of its own, is the will of the common legislation. The highest moral law is the expression of self-discipline. It embodies the human dignity and nobility. It embodies the admiration of the moral law. "Immortal soul", is the eternal pursuit of the moral otology that has to be good. It ensures the

possibility of a good implementation from the time dimension. If you want to ensure the realization of the unity of morality and happiness from a higher level, we might come to discuss Kant's last hypothesis, namely the existence of the God. "Good God is to ensure the absolute necessity of its thought and its behavior. It is good and independent and it is universal supreme dominator of the universe". (Zhou, 2007) Unlike the Christian God, here, the God Kant proposes is a kind of moral suspension. Having a God, he thinks, is to ensure that the moral principle is not passive implementation of heteronomy, not vitality and vigor but rational independent legislation. It is self-discipline. This view proposed by can Kant be said to be unique in the history of ethical thought, because moral has been given a priority, as a result, the conflict between happiness and morality can be smoothly solved.

CONCLUSION

Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy is one of the most distinctive achievements of the European Enlightenment. This paper explores the basic idea about the relationship between morality and happiness. To Kant, the relationship between morality and religion is a problem not only of moral philosophy but also of philosophy of religion. In supreme good, the virtue that deserves happiness is of priority. And virtue is possible only if freedom is presumed. In philosophy of religion, the revealed traditional religion is replaced by a kind of rational one, which is rational and gives man freedom and dignity. Starting from the binary world and human's duality, the author discusses Kant's way of solving the conflict between morality and happiness. Kant's central tenets, key arguments, and core values are presented, making the readers have access to his deep thinking about the good God, morality and happiness. It also provides us with the way in which to reach the understanding of happiness and morality.

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