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### **Exploring the Origins of Morality**

Charisi, Eftychia

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# Exploring the origins of Morality

A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the degree of Master of Research (MAREs) in  
Philosophy and Religion

Bangor University

By Eftychia Charisi

BA Political Sciences (2010, Thessaloniki) Bachelor of the Arts in Political Sciences,  
2010 Aristotle University Greece

MA International Relations (2012 London) Master of the Arts in International relations,  
2012 Middlesex University London UK

School of History, Philosophy and Social Sciences

Bangor University

Gwynedd, LL57 2DG, UK

[www.bangor.ac.uk](http://www.bangor.ac.uk)

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## Declaration

Yr wyf drwy hyn yn datgan mai canlyniad fy ymchwil fy hun yw'r thesis hwn, ac eithrio lle nodir yn wahanol. Caiff ffynonellau eraill eu cydnabod gan droednodiadau yn rhoi cyfeiriadau eglur. Nid yw sylwedd y gwaith hwn wedi cael ei dderbyn o'r blaen ar gyfer unrhyw radd, ac nid yw'n cael ei gyflwyno ar yr un pryd mewn ymgeisiaeth am unrhyw radd oni bai ei fod, fel y cytunwyd gan y Brifysgol, am gymwysterau deuol cymeradwy.

I hereby declare that this thesis is the results of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. All other sources are acknowledged by bibliographic references. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree unless, as agreed by the University, for approved dual awards.

## Abstract

This paper will explore the origins of morality. There will be a description of theories that ground morality on theological, sociological, cosmological and biological sources. The interest will be focused on how morality evolved through time and how its development shifted its point of origin and key element. More specifically, the ancient moral philosophy was focused on obtaining answers to the question 'what is good for man?'. The philosophers of that period considered virtue as the highest good. Later, when organized religion developed God became the divine law-giver and source of ethical behavior. After the middle-ages, the focal point of the initial question shifted towards other directions. Some good examples are the Utilitarian theory of Bentham and Mill and Kant's categorical imperatives, where the standard of 'how we ought to act?' is not virtue anymore. In the case of utilitarianism, the motive for an act should be that the result produced by the act itself must contribute the most possible welfare for the largest amount of people. In the second case, Kant's theory, the motive for an act should be the respect towards the moral (universal) law. However, there are some contemporary philosophers and free thinkers, like Anscombe, who believe that we are going through a period of moral bankruptcy and a revival of virtue ethics would recalibrate our moral compass. The link between our brain(perception) and morality will be discussed as it could be the key to unlock the mystery of morality's origins.



## Introduction

Since the day we are born, we begin the journey of our learning process. We imitate people around us, the things they do or say, we copy their behaviors; learn their set of values and habits. While growing up we absorb information from our home, our peers, our surroundings and the educational system. After a point, on a fruitful age, we are ready to think on our own what we consider important for ourselves in life. Throughout this initial part of the journey, is where we receive the foundations of our moral education; we built our character that will define the path of our life and our way of thinking. I will use the example of two siblings to describe the parts of this journey and discuss its direction.

A brother and a sister grow up together in the same household, with their two parents nurturing them and teaching them the basic norms and values; as they themselves were taught from their own parents and guided their lives so far. Both going to the same school(primary), both taught by the same teacher-receiving the same information and both interacting with the same classmates. During this first stage, they were taught what is right and wrong, and how they should behave. Home and school formulated the initial base of values and concepts of life. After this common part, life paths might change by choosing a different school or making a different choice that will lead elsewhere. At this point, there is a crucial moment that affects the formation of characters and behaviors. After a common route, for the first 10-12 years with more or less the same intake of information, there are numerous differences that take place in beliefs, behavior, dreams and principles. This whole process that entails the intake of knowledge, forming of beliefs, molding of character, evolving consciousness, setting goals and making choices, is the formation of our moral behavior.

A moral behavior is to act according to one's moral values and standards. According to paedopsychology experts and researchers, the children who demonstrate prosocial and moral behavior when they share, help, co-operate, communicate, sympathize or in otherwise, they demonstrate ability to care about others (Reed, 1987).

Lawrence Kohlberg was an American psychologist and educator known for his theory of moral development. According to him, there are several elements that affect whether an individual will act morally. The ability to reason about moral issues provides a basic level of understanding necessary for moral action. According to Kohlberg's theory of moral development, individuals progress through stages of moral reasoning with higher order reasoning including concepts of fairness, justice and welfare (Reed, 1987, pp. 441-456).

Through the process of reasoning and judgment, an individual is able evaluate interpret the moral situation, formulate the moral ideal and choose a course of action that corresponds to one's moral values (Talwar, 2011).

Our moral behavior is the expression of our concept of morality. The branch of philosophy that is concerned with morality and ethics is Moral Philosophy; it is the study of the ideas and the psychology involved in individual morality. It explores the nature of morality, debates right and wrong and examines how people should conduct their lives. There are three branches meta-ethics, normative and applied ethics (Schneewind, 2002).

There have been many philosophers, academics, researchers and scientists who have tried to provide an answer to the question: 'where does morality come from?'. So far there have been explanations that grounded morality to theological, biological, cosmological and sociological sources. There are some who believe that morality is a product of human nature or a result of our capacity to self-reflect on objective truths of our cosmos. There are also those who claim that moral behaviors are social conventions in order for people to co-exist. And finally, some go even further, proclaiming that it is merely a local byproduct of cultural norms.

## Purpose of research

The purpose of this research is to present the different views on the origins of morality and explore the relation between morality, the divine and human evolution. I will describe the theories of how morality developed through time based on cosmological, sociological, theological and biological sources. Special attention will be given to the effects of perception and the inadequacy of on moral development.

I will start by describing cosmogony and the old world where the concept of philosophy originated from. Morality was not a concept yet, but it's first values were part of human thought in their primal form. I will present the divisions of meta-ethics and continue with definitions morality and assigned meaning through time. This work will address and discuss moral syllogisms and theories that fall under three main branches of ethical theories; virtue ethics, deontology and consequentialism.

Considering the effect both time and human evolution had on moral development, I will try to keep a chronological order of presenting the theories that addressed the issue of morality's origins. The Classics Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics will be discussed. After that the argument that morality derives from a theological source will be presented; The Divine Command and Natural Law theories will be described. I will address the argument whether morality derives from God and the role religion played in the process of moral development. I will also discuss some arguments on our moral capacity without religion by presenting a debate.

Thomas Aquinas theory will be presented as it is the bedrock where the Catholic Church built its moral tenets. I will speak about the problem of evil and use it as a bridge to move on to Kant's analysis of morality, free will and God's element. In the following chapters I will present the main principles from Kantianism and Humeism on morality; and discuss their differences. I will move on to Utilitarianism and present the sociological necessity as morality's source; Adam Smith, John Rawls and Thomas Hobbs theories will be discussed as well.

In the following chapters I will approach morality's biological origins by discussing Darwin's theory and the effect it had on philosophy, religion and science. Moving forward I will address the role of perception (mind) by Patricia Churchland's theory and present Peter Singer's view. Continuing from how perception forms or affects our morality I will present the language issue and discuss Wittgenstein's theory and comments. I will also discuss the revival of stoicism and virtue ethics, by presenting arguments from the philosophers Elizabeth Anscombe and Alasdair Macintyre. Finally, I will try to explain where I think morality originates from.

## Definitions

### Ethics

Ethics is an ancient concept. It derives from the Greek word *ethicos* which means the one having a moral character. The word *ethicos* comes from the Greek word *Ethos* (ἦθος, ἔθος; plurals: *ethe*, ἦθη; *ethea*, ἦθεα), originally meaning "accustomed place" (as in ἦθεα ἵππων "the habitats of horses", Iliad 6.511, 15.268). It is used and developed extensively in Aristoteles's *Virtue ethics* and *Rhetorica* (Douglas, 2020).

Ethics refer to rules provided by an external source; it is a system of conduct. Morals refer to an individual's own principles, a code he or she abides with. The primary focus of ethics is to determine right and wrong conduct, both in theory and in specific situations. While certain issues are often debated, primary ethical imperatives, such as not committing murder can be codified into law, which allows for a standard of justice. Practical Applied Ethics is important because it gives individuals a basis on which to praise or decry an action and to punish or reward it. The normative or prescriptive ethics establishes how things should or ought to be, how do we value things, which things are good or bad and which actions are right or wrong. It attempts to develop a set of rules governing human conduct and establish a set of norms for action. There are 3 main categories in normative ethics: consequentialism, deontology and virtue ethics (Singer, A companion to Ethics, 1991).

Both terms, morality and ethics, have been used interchangeably in discourse in different fields with certain connotations attached to them. Morality is considered one of the abstract values that is fully formed into its definition according to the context it is used in, like freedom, fear, happiness or love. It is usually associated with religion. Its elements are called morals. Ethics on the other hand, is understood more as a system or a code that we use to create moral frameworks or professional standards, like bioethics; it has more to do with our conduct, whereas morality has to do with our concept of conduct.

### Morality

The word 'morality' derives from the Latin *moralis* and old French *moralite* followed by the late

Latin moralitas, turned in the English moral. Cicero, in his work “De Fato” 44 B.C., tried to translate the word ethikos from the Latin work mos (genitive moris) which meant: one’s disposition. In Plural, mos is mores, the ‘mores and customs’ that we have today; manners, morals, habits. (Douglas, 2020).

The Stanford Encyclopedia gives several definitions of Morality, naming it as ‘moral judgement’, according to its categorization: normative and descriptive; It defines it as a code of conduct put forward from a group or society and acknowledged by a group of rational people or an individual for her/his own behavior (Gert, 2017). According to C H. Whiteley, the usage of Morality is not precise and consistent in ordinary language (Wallace George, 1970, p. 21).

There have been explicit attempts to define morality but are not commonly encountered. It has been defined differently by many philosophers according to what kind of theory of morality they wish to develop and support. Being an abstract value, as regarded by many, it has a necessary adjustability to certain variables, such as time and culture. The difficulties of defining something that is reliant to abstract variables or unmeasurable is just an add-on to the inadequacies we face with human language. Any attempt to define something and assert its definition as a common point of reference is non-sensical, according to Wittgenstein, as our perception of the specified subject, material or immaterial, is altered to a certain degree due to our individualistic point of view.

## How morality works

Across all cultures and human societies there is a myth that was passed on from generation to generation about how morality originated. In order people to thrive and manage to live well with each other, they established a set of rules according to the needs of their group. These rules were controlled by their own group leader with the priesthood's corroboration in order to enforce them. With life being difficult and harsh, people were driven by self-preservation and self-interest and thus not always had their fellows' welfare in mind. So, although we were not naturally good to each other, we were forced to be, for fear of god.

## The mimetic theory

There is a possibility that we are genetically predisposed to goodness, but our moral intuitions would have stayed primal and never developed further if we never had expressed them or practiced them on other beings. But most importantly, morality could have never taken its shape and molded our characters if we didn't have in our lives 'moral exemplars', as Aristotle put it. These are unique role models, people that we connect with and admire. Mimicking behaviors we admire by following someone's lead, can give shape to our principles and form our internal moral code. The mimetic theory initially was argued by Aristotle, but was fully developed as a concept from Rene Girard, a 20<sup>th</sup> century French anthropologist. Its key insight is that human desire is not an autonomous process but a collective one. We want things because others want them. In our context Aristotle uses the process of mimesis as a tool of re-representation not copying others or desires. The philosopher claimed that if we see an example of an action or reaction and reproduce it in a repetitive rate, it will become then part of our self or routine. Aristotle stressed out the importance of the 'exemplars', ethical targets that set example and then followed by other individuals. Imitation leads to practice that leads to acquiring the practiced act as a trait. We see good deeds and repeat them, either out of inclination or for wanting to become our admirations, feel more of what delights us when we do good deeds, from a father or mother role models to other fellow humans that inspire us and pave the way.

## The Nature of Morality

Jesus taught that being good is to act with kindness towards the weak. Nietzsche claimed that morality is the bravery and courage of the powerful and strong. Plato argued that morality is the

effective coordination of everything inside and outside of us. There is great distance between what morality was for many prominent historical figures. Moral development was a long process of refining ideas from myths, public dreams and from the collective unconsciousness, towards developing artificial intelligence and embedding moral codes in systems or algorithms. We can acknowledge that all ethical theories have a constant point of reference which is the idea to 'protect life'. As this discourse is an absolute privilege of humans its paramount value is life itself, intelligible life. The 'do not harm' principle is embedded in almost all moral theories, throughout history.

### Properties and Elements

Morality is composed by primary moral values and elements; it is regulated by a moral authority and is subject to time. J. L. Mackie tried to shed some light on the mystery behind the moral authority. Morality appears to claim objective of authority: it claims to be capably authoritative in guiding our actions, irrespective of our varying ends and attitudes and transcending the local authority of human social institutions. On reflection its special authority appears mysterious and we may suspect it is illusory. The mystery of moral authority will scrutinize morality's claims to objective authority. As morality is not at all what we ordinarily take it to be, there is not one true moral system and much of our moral language is seriously flawed. If we analyze its moral properties, we can identify some elements that stand out universally throughout human evolution and history. There are some naturally developed values whose functions advance cooperation, robustness, conflict resolution and safety diffusion and they are: possession, fairness, respect, loyalty, kinship, humility, reciprocity (Balckford, 2016).

### Obligations

Morality requires impartiality. The basic idea here is that every person's rights matter and are equally important, regardless of their race, sex, social status, religion or any other reason that categorizes people to any existent groups. From a moral point of view, there are no privileged persons, and everyone is equal. The moral judgments we make should be based on good reasons. It is required that we are impartial in our consideration of each individuals' interests by outside factors that might affect our feelings and our reasoning. We cannot rely on our feelings in order to exercise judgment, no matter how strong they are, as they may be irrational products of selfishness, prejudice, cultural conditioning or disgust. Morality is a matter of consulting reason.

If no good reason can be provided, you may reject any advice as arbitrary or unfounded. (Rachels, 2003)

Prichard in his work dismisses a general answer to the question 'what is a moral obligation?' He believes moral obligations cannot be defined in a general sense and in terms of other things. It is improper to reply that all things or acts are right for the same reason. We have to take into account two permissible grounds for moral obligation: the goodness of the effect of an action and the goodness of the act itself.

In the first instance, although utilitarian, it fails to align/comply with our true moral conviction, we are forced to follow it for the best maximum results and the greater good but it may come against our personal moral convictions or even ignore crucial moral stances that don't fit the utilitarian approach. In the second instance, it lacks capacity to encapsulate/express fully the role that motive plays in deciding the rightness of an action. Moral principles are not derivable from one single principle. "Each is independent and possesses its own reason as the basis for a given moral obligation" (Prichard H. A., 2003)

Prichard claims in his chapter "Does moral philosophy rest upon a mistake?"; that in order to compose our true attitude towards a moral obligation we should base our understanding, whether a moral action depends upon our own good or what is good. He goes on declaring that obligations are "underivative, immediate, and self-evident". We do not acknowledge them through logical arguments or procedures of non-moral thinking. He compares it to the 'theory of knowledge'. The mistake that moral philosophy rests on links obligation to virtue or desire and is parallel to the fault that the 'theory of knowledge' fosters; "like moral obligation, knowledge is immediate; it need not be vindicated or improved by additional knowledge". Once we collect an information its epistemological dynamic is solid and instant (Prichard H. A., 2003, pp. 1-20).

#### The promise as a moral obligation

When we give our promise to perform an action (or be in a state of actions/feelings), we create an unwritten binding contract to follow that statement. Although a promise does not denote a fact we can bring into action per se, we can still be true to our promise by creating or bringing into existence something else.

#### Intrinsic moral value

Robert Audi in his research and theory addressed two vital questions for the intrinsic moral value. How value of any kind is related to moral rightness and moral obligation? Are right actions, equivalent to those that it is in some way good to permit, and are morally obligatory actions those



that it would be bad not to perform? Moore argued that experiences can be carriers of intrinsic value. He analyzed the experience of a work of art-say a painting- describing how the experience it provokes, an appropriate aesthetic experience is good in itself. This direction of thought that items, such as artworks, are in a sense 'good' in themselves, measured by the experiential effect they have, led Moore to introduce the notion of 'inherent' value and principles of organic unities. These concepts conduce to forming the basis for a theory of value that includes a plethora of plausible value judgements (Audi, 1997, pp. 135-154).

Plato in his work 'The Republic' poses the question: 'Will a man be better off for doing his duty?', and a following question "Ought man to do his duty?". Let's go back in time and discuss how experiences were forming reality and what duty entailed.

## Cosmological origins

### In the Beginning

Starting from the ancient Classical times the journey of science and philosophy begins hand in hand. The birth of the species of gods in antiquity and the later foundation of monotheism defined our cultures and values throughout human history. The purpose and quality of life occupied the human mind since the first tribes of humans. The mysteries of the divine forces ruled the lives and minds of men for thousands of years. Finally, after the Middle Ages, the era of the Enlightenment arrived in the western world. During that time of 'light', scientists, superstition gave way to the 'age of Reason', and free thought was released from the religious constraints that kept it in custody for almost a millennium. Most developed theories during the enlightened times created tidal effects in science and philosophy with following sociopolitical movements. Those profound effects led to the American and French Revolutions. Religion received severe criticism, the idea of god's existence was challenged and new theories on the origins of human life came to light.

Professor Evangelos P. Papanoutsos, was a Greek educator, essayist, philosopher and teacher. In one of his books 'Ethiki' he described the path of the moral life from the deep ancient times to the living present. He tried to provide a 'map' of how morality might have come to be to the state it was during his lifetime in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the most part of his book there is an evident yearning for a return to virtue ethics as he believed culture and history should be the guiding beacons for our sight in the future. He begins by taking us back to the beginning of all things and discusses the origin of philosophy that exercised the human mind towards a decent way of life.

### The mystery of the old world

Papanoutsos begins by describing the atmosphere of the early world where man lived in between the realms of dream and reality- the spiritual and physical world. Reality is defined by reason and our senses and our spiritual affluence is conducted in the sphere of dreams and subconscious abysses. The early men knew that this world of mystery was full of fascination and misery. In our most internal process of reason, where reason itself is in its truest form, there lies the concept of our existence. There, also lies our understanding of God. And as it exists in there it ingrains our

personal existence with mysteries we might never solve. This mystagogical amygdala of our psyche is the center of all meanings. Around this center, the rest of the world exists, vast and mysterious. This world stands proof of a staggering presence of the 'essence'. As human beings we are in awe before it; so small, unable, unequipped to comprehend it.

Philosophy has its origins deep in the past of civilizations. When men secured a sheltered way of life, food sources and protection against other animals, in times of peace where all talents and gifts unveiled themselves, the contemplation begun. A contemplation that shaped the concept of wisdom and the familiars with it were named ... Philosophers. Philosophy in the ancient world, in its first steps was developed in Ancient Greece. It is considered Science in its universality and it derived from the decline of Myth. By observation and contemplation, the first Philosophers addressed the questions of existence, separation of species, how nature works and life itself.

Philosophy in its original pure form was science, and specifically physics- the science observing the natural/physical world. The magic and rituals of the old ways gave way to research and observation. It was as if the mind had awaked from its deep sleep full of dreams and oblivion. Its awakening marked the beginning of seeking answers from the real world. It created the need for men to take control of their own destinies. The philosophers were pushing forward their minds to cross the lines of existing knowledge and to look at the world around them with clear eyes. They wondered what is the one utter (eschaton) thing that is the unbreakable ingredient of all beings and things. This line initially was crossed by Democritus (460-360 BCE) who discovered that everything is composed by atoms and between them lies empty space.

Morality was not always perceived the way we understand it today. It has undergone a lot of transformation and its core values have been slowly developed and reappraised throughout human history. Since the ancient Classic times when great philosophers argued trends for patterns of behavior, divine theories, cathartic tragedies and quests for the meaning of life, morality was a code that was dictated by the divine or the occult and its value was measured by the social status an individual formed through participation. In ancient Athens of Pericles, good men had to be citizens with active social life and of course Greeks by blood; all the rest were considered barbarians or becoming slaves. The standard of morality and social value was someone's ethnicity.

In a general depiction of the ancient world and the level of existing moral standards, life was dangerous, short and hard. Ancient religions were demanding human sacrifices, consummations of under-aged pairs. But aren't all religions demanding of their believers' forms of sacrifices, as a sign of faith? Although their dogmas might have evolved in a particular way, their secular constraints and spiritual demands still mainly remain the same. Personal interest was above and beyond any collective state of providence, the survival of the fittest was the rule and laws were a mere fraction of what we have come to know in the last century. But, through all this grim scenario, the philosophical thought begun to develop and questioned practices and ideas.

As Professor E. Papanoutsos argues in his book, if we want to give a chronological timeline of the development of the sciences that revealed the world to us, we have to go as follows: Myth, Physics, Ethics, Meta-Ethics, Aesthetics. A process of transformation that initiates from within and carves its way out only to recast the sculpture of ethos and lead us to a new immersion. First there is the issue of being (ontos>όντος) and then the issue of value (aksia>αξία). Firstly, we have to understand what is in order to assign meaning or value to it. Ontology is the study of the first principles in the essence of being (Papanoutsos, 2010). Once we identify 'what is', we can move on to 'why it is' and 'how'. When the evaluation of the myth begun, nothing could prevent its fall. Failing to expand its boundaries and satisfy further queries, it gave its place to a higher form of reasoning outside of the imaginary realm. That higher form was Physics; the form of science concerned with nature and the properties of matter and energy. Philosophy begun to research and evaluate physical properties and phenomena. Logic conquered concepts of understanding, acting and thinking. Naturally, after evaluating all the elements of myth that formed reality, the ethical elements followed. Ethics after Physics; why after what. The issue of value after the issue of being or existence.

### The Fall of Myth

Historically morality and behavior issues were not the first subjects the ancient thinkers dwelt upon. Philosophy initially was science in its purest form, and it was born out of the fall of the myth. There is always a major disaster that needs to take place before the tables of cosmogony turn; and when the dust settles, a new order is born, a new concept, a new religion. Back then the world and its components were explained with stories, songs and fleeting thoughts that sprung from imagination. Monsters and Gods were taking forms and blessed or punished man according

to their wimp. This primeval way of thinking ruled man's concept of why his surroundings are the way they are, for hundreds and hundreds of years. Whatever could be explained within mind or imagination became a story or a song and the rest that remained a mystery were attributed to the divine element of gods.

Myth is a folklore genre consisting of narratives and stories that play a fundamental role in a people's history. It was these foundational tales and origin myths that shaped cultures, formed religions and transcribed the customs and mores of our early moral and legal systems. It is no accident that today the word has reached the assigned meaning of 'a commonly believed but false idea'. By singing stories, by acting them out the highest form of all arts was born. Theater. The ancient Greeks held the notion that theater was a school, a temple, an arena where the actors were going through such emotional distress to communicate the truth of feelings in order to educate the souls of the viewers and help them reach katharsis- cleansing through enacting their tragedies. In literal etymological translation the ancient Greek verb of 'to entertain someone' (psychagogw>ψυχαγωγώ), meant to stir their psyche, their soul.

As myth ruled known life, all men were born and lived through it equally. All things conceived and explained inside it. Myth was a gift that gave birth to the cosmic explanation of the world and the origins of man. It was divinely anointed pure and guided from a long historical tradition-guaranty of its authority. When the mythical cosmogony started failing, then its intellectual erosion begun. The restless mind, that seeks and doubts unsatisfied by existing truths, is led to new lands of discovery.

Almost from the 18th to the 7th century BCE people travelled more and further than before. Invasions led displaced nations to move across the lands carrying the old myths and the old ways with them, crashing into new worlds and civilizations, merging with them. Mathematics, astronomy, physics and medicine were the ruling sciences across the known world. Trading routes were established that started from India, China, Mesopotamia and Sumeria, leading to today's Middle East and reaching the Mediterranean and Greece. All births of cultures took place in that fertile route of trade. Knowledge and ideas travelled along with goods and cargo. The science of philosophy in its earliest form carried with travelers and caravans, picking up scattered intellects along its way, setting man to the path of abandoning the myth and moving forward to the unknown philosophical realm. The fall of myth had begun. The new information was coming through as knowledge and the new experiences were too attractive to be ignored. It was as if men felt the need they needed to outgrow the old stories of demons and fairytales and finally see the

world with clear eyes. Observation and exploration replaced imagination and superstition. The mentality of staying indoors was slowly abandoned and men stormed out of their caves and shelters to see the world, to feel it, to learn from it (Papanoutsos, 2010, p. 18).

## The order of Science

### First it was Science and then Physics

The first thinkers entrusted the evaluation of all known concepts in reason. Once they realized self-reflection and free will were the actual differences between men and beasts, reason was crowned the highest authority. Its triumph over all other opponents, such as the divine element, was undeniable. Reason granted knowledge and knowledge led to the truth. The prominent belief of the times was that due to our capacity for logic, we were able to practice the following: to evaluate principles, to explore and substantiate religious beliefs, to comprehend and practice moral obligations and rules of Law. The same way that reason emerged and validated scientific knowledge, scientists and philosophers hoped it would clarify the essence and genesis of values and principles.

### After Physics comes Ethics

When the intellectuals of the times advanced their scientific research and method, the next step was to re-examine the conduct of living. The Sophists used their rationale to overcome the dream and oblivion that the souls found comfort in. The old stories were unable to quench this thirst for truth and slowly their authority was undermined and became entertainment. Sophocles and his tragedies, the theatrical plays that led to catharsis, integrated old myths and used them to educate the crowds. Aesop's fables that have still survived today, since were taught to children and students for their easily comprehensive moral gist. This group of men, whose drive was to promote the conscious life, understood the challenge of penetrating the veil of oblivion into the light, with their mind as the weapon. Their quest later acquired a higher purpose. The challenge was whether reason could equally extend its powers and justify the spiritual concerns. Whether it could ground the religious beliefs to the source of the one truth, by successfully employing similar methods used to explain the natural world. Greek language in its infinite wisdom and perfect structure stated that fact in the etymological creation of the word truth (Truth=αλήθεια, α-λήθη, getting out of-oblivion).

After obtaining knowledge of 'what was', the time came to understand why there was such a truth. The idea was that now that man begun to understand his surroundings, why things were the way they were, he was compelled to find out what they meant. So, systemic knowledge was used, heightened in its sum to Natural Science, in order to provide a clear understanding of the cosmos;

suchlike with reason the attempt would be to expound the essence and genesis of values, to verify them and ground their authority somewhere solid. By employing reason, philosophers were attempting to elucidate the oversight of the universe. This endeavor would discover and maintain the critically clarified and solidly grounded principles of man's religious, political and ethical life. This grounding would offer stability for growth and development.

Twice in the history of western intellect, reason made a strong appearance-almost with a religious effect and shifted all philosophical thinking. First with the Stoics in 310 BC, deriving from Socrates teachings, and almost 2000 years later in 1723 AD with Immanuel Kant. Both times the world was struggling to be released from a form of oblivion. The Stoics from the Myth and Kant's middle ages from the constraints of religious superstition. This emergence did not take place under the same circumstances or with the same way, but it shared the same force and purpose. It is notable that on both instances this unprecedented faith to reason emerged in the so-called times of Enlightenment. The need to find the source of morality was well advanced in the ancient Classic Times. Socrates, by relying in reason, claimed that only Logos could establish the critically clarified, valid and steadfast rules for the religious, ethical and political conduct of Man. (Papanoutsos, 2010, p.24).

### The power of the Unseen

In the time of the Sophists and the Stoics men understood the reality of their kin by living in fear and moral anarchy. And whilst the existence of laws prevented people from doing evil openly, they failed to reach the secret evil lurking in their heart. One of the most renown Sophists, Critias, a known student of Socrates, supported the theory that there was a wise man who had the brilliant idea to present the natural phenomena with unknown mysterious powers. He persuaded his peers that they are all-knowing and all-seeing divine entities who watch them all the time and expressed their wrath or pleasure with natural disasters or blessings. We can see how that element of divine trait, the all-seeing eye, transferred through time to other religions and was used as a moral constraint for the believers' soul (Papanoutsos, 2010, p.26).

Value concepts can be identified inside legal codes in commercial documents, hero stories, myths, old sayings and wisdom words. The earliest findings of such samples go back to the two



first thriving civilizations in Egypt and Mesopotamia. In these city-states, church and state were abound. The temple had its own territorial land and the Stewart-Priest there was also acting as a judge. The local ruler (state) was godlily chosen and his authority enjoyed a divine state. The people were deemed to be in the service of the gods to keep them at ease. The ruler governed with a codex, allegedly given to him by the chief Deity and it was clearly a projection of current social norms and practices. Of course, Gods would be consulted on immediate problems, through readings, omens, sacrifices, weather signs; a system that vested tremendous power in the temple priesthood (Singer, 1991). State and church were inseparable and abound from first productive societies, out of necessity and functionality and he Divine often instructed the judicial body of each city-state. Therefore, it was religion indeed that constructed the matrix of ethical codes initially. Even in the early Roman codes of law, there was a similar patriarchic system in place.

### The custom becoming law

As in all ancient societies Roman law begun with custom. A custom is a way of doing things over time. The idea of patria potestas is a Latin term referring to the power that the roman father-figure had over the members of his family. It was one of the most unique customs of the ancient Romans. This system crowned one individual as the sole source of authority and the only judge of things in the whole family. Units of patriarchal leader-figures were regulating society. The powerful cast, the aristocracy, had the threshold of wealth and knowledge. All others had to serve a purpose towards the upper-class and the state. If they didn't so, they were useless, sold as slaves or sacrificed to please gods. Although this gruesome scenery was indeed the bitter reality for many centuries there were also respected networks of moral codes in the religious and legal systems of certain civilizations (John, 1967, pp. 113-122).

## The Classical Times

### The Stoics

Zeno of Citium, a pupil of Antisthenes founder of Cynicism, contributed in the philosophical flourishing in the ancient Greco-Roman times with the theory of Stoicism. Zeno's school taught that virtue, the highest good, was based on knowledge. Those who acquire it are the 'wise' ones, who live in harmony with the Divine Reason (Fate) that has power over nature and men. These wise men are indifferent to the changes of fortune and any material pursuits. The movement flourished in Socrates time, around 3rd BC and endured until the first centuries AD. Some of its famous enthusiasts are Epictetus, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius. Epictetus specifically was remembered for the religious tone of his teachings, which commended him to numerous early Christian thinkers. He preached that the greatest good is serenity, contentment and peace of mind. These can be achieved with the self-mastery over one's desires and emotions. It was essential for one to be free from material attachments. In particular, sex drive and sexual acts, which were the greatest threat to integrity and balanced equilibrium of a man's mind. Epictetus claimed that difficult problems should not be avoided but embraced as a spiritual exercise.

The Stoics and the Cynics planted the seeds for the compelling development of morality. Both groups believed that man should and must live his life by the moral code, void of shallow desires for material goods and luxuries; he should use his reason to judge right from wrong and accept the natural order of things. Both of this philosophical schools developed their theories from the teaching of Heraclitus (the Stoics) and Socrates (the Cynics). The Cynics believed that man's purpose in life is to live in accordance with nature. As rational beings that men were, they could become happy with education and living in harmony with the natural order of things, free from material desires. The Stoics claimed that the keystones of life, that lead to eudaimonia and spiritual plentitude were grounded on logos and physis- reason and nature. According to their teachings, rational beings are led to eudaimonia only by accepting moments and life as they come and are not controlled by desires or distinctive feelings of fear, pleasure or pain. Instead they understand the cosmos, and their role in it, by conducting a useful and moral life.

These two philosophical currents look like they sprung from the same source as their similarities

are overwhelming, but there is a critical distinction between them. For the Stoics virtue is the primary and only principle worth having. Anything else, outside virtue, wealth, health, pleasure, is not characterized as good or bad but it is a framework to practice virtue, to exercise the mind's moral capabilities. These external things, outside virtue, were not good or bad in themselves but have value as 'material' for virtue to act upon. This concept was held as primary source for many religious dogmas and was incorporated in ecclesiastical readings and scriptures. The Stoics also believed in prudence inside men. Prudence- *phronesis*, was practiced when the right circumstances arrived and the specific action taken, would indicate the quality of the actor; one's character. They claimed that disastrous feelings (passions) were coming from bad judgements. Their high-value principle was the prompting to maintain will in line with natural order and abide by the laws of nature, as nature was the mother-source of all things and beings in life.

According to the Stoic and Cynic Philosophy, the 'good life' had nothing to do with a material life but the spiritual. In addition, ancient Greeks considered the material life, the comfortable life, as an inferior way of life from the noble life of an active citizen and spiritual man. The accumulation of wealth, the submission to the desires of the flesh, the constant satisfaction of cravings without any measure were leading to a corrupted way of life, sterile from moral obligations. They believed when they conducted an 'easy' life, passions flourished and morals decayed. The spirit is led to indolence (*akrasia*), rational paralysis, and our moral aptitude is corroded. The continuous practice of maintaining control over our desires and our spiritual exercise can make a man moral. Only through balance we can reach a continuous state of happiness, a *telos* that is the meaning of all ends and a state of fullness. Aristotle named that *eudaimonia*, *eu* < *εὖ* < good and *daemon* < *δαίμων* < spirit, you reach a state where you are the best of what you can become spiritually, you've reached the highest level (Durant, 1953).

In the ancient times of the Stoics and the Cynics, evil had a different meaning. A vial act or a corrupted way of thinking were a result of incomplete cultural training or the lack of it. Ignorance was morality's number one opponent. Where ignorance thrived, a virtuous life was impossible as vices prospered. Socrates realized that when the pneumatic truth deriving from our inner essence, our relation to nature and the gods were neglected in such extent that the flesh was superior to spirit in our existence, then true evil was able to overtake good men, consuming their soul with corruption and decay. Only through constant practice, exercise of our intrinsic moral instincts, obtaining knowledge and maintaining our impulses that prompt vicious acts we can reach the

highest good. This process and its end are, what later Aristotle called eudaimonia, and the religions of the world named heaven. At a very later point, Kant would argue that the primary issue of a man's ethical adventure should not be the search for happiness but the cultivation of his ability to conduct a moral life, virtue itself and duty.

### The Sophists

The Sophists were a group of highly intellectual and perceptive men. They were teaching the relativity of all sorts of values. The properties of morality and social life gain their credibility not by nature, but from a deeply personal unknown inner will that forces them upon us. After their long habitual practice by men, they become established values of our daily conduct and form our mores and customs. So, these values exist by custom law and not by nature. By law here, is described the arranged ethical values that came to place by the model of patria potestas, the patriarchic archetype.

Keen masters of the rhetorical art, the sophists manipulated to their benefit the three elements (Pathos, Logos, Ethos) that a man's essence was composed from. They were able to master a crowd by appealing to the sentiments of the mob and persuading it of their will. During their prime time in ancient Athens, the infamous rise of the Thirty tyrants took place after the Peloponnesian war in 404 BCE. The war lasted thirty years and depleted Athens and Sparta of men and resources. The Athenians lost the war and an elected pro-Spartan team of thirty men ruled the capital for eight months. During that time a significant percentage of the Athenian population, mainly democratic supporters, was executed or exiled and their properties seized. Those thirty rulers became known as the Thirty tyrants because of their cruel and vile tactics. Their theory was that holy and unholy, just and unjust, good and evil are all forms of living that do not have an absolutely defined universal and eternal content but vary from place to place and from time to time. What defined them as rulers was the existing concept that they were the few eclectic men (politicians, warlords, aristocrats, religious leaders) who have the means to enforce their will to those who were weak and unworthy of such honors. The obligation of the weak is to yield and adjust to the rules of those in power (Dudley, 1937).

It is astounding the level of awareness we read in writings of historian Thucydides for Critias' and Democritus' way of thinking. They explained the necessity of gods and religion in their speeches

to the crowds of Athens. The twelve gods of Olympus were crafted by men, out of the necessity of explanation, a way of understanding forces unknown or express gratitude for gifts earth provided. They named the bread Demetra, the fire Hephaestus, the water Poseidon and the wine Dionysus. Every god or demi-god served a purpose of explanation and attribution. Critias went a step further and claimed that there was a time that men lived in moral anarchy and in order to protect themselves from other evil men, they created laws. The laws though punished only the openly evil-doers and those who worked in secret escaped them. Then a man of great spirit conceived a brilliant idea. He presented to all his fellow men, the forces of Nature as gods and persuaded them that these gods were all-seeing and all-knowing. As nothing could stay hidden from their wrath, the evildoers would restrain themselves. And so, the species of gods was born! (Thucycides, 2013)

### Socrates and the Stoic tradition

*“We are discussing no small matter, but how we ought to live”*, stated Socrates in Plato’s Republic (ca 390 BC). Socrates was born in a time of political upheaval. He lived through the Greek thirty-year civil war and saw his beloved city plunging into moral decay. He argued that people will naturally do good provided that they know what ‘good’ is. Evil acts and thoughts were purely the result of ignorance. He equated knowledge with self-awareness and wisdom with happiness. So, whoever had knowledge would do the right or good thing and would reach happiness. The practice of doing the right thing, is the practice of virtue itself. Socrates believed in studying the ethics. If we are educated and acquire the knowledge of right and wrong, we ought to choose right; we will choose right. There is no excuse for choosing wrong. The greatest enemy of virtue is indolence<ακρασία<akrasia, which is the weakness of the will. Only by practicing self-control<εγκράτεια<enkrateia we can master the virtues and attain happiness; if we stay apathetic and not educate our mind to discipline our desires, our weak spirit will be consumed by our passions.

Socrates believed “Ουδείς εκών κακός”, that no one is born evil. He was an avid believer of Logos and pledged his faith in the energy of reason that manifested inside men as critical thinking and in nature, as order and causal function. He expected that logos would regulate unconditionally with unaltered standards the moral behavior of man and guaranteed him the possession of the highest of goods; a virtuous, good life. Even in the face of death he firmly believed that his fellow

Athenians would change their irrational thinking for his charges and acknowledge the irrationality of their intentions, if they could see clearly and evaluate with proper knowledge the situation (Papanoutsos, 2010).

Logos here is not just a rhetorical instrument of persuasion. If it spoken the right way, the rational way, and used with rational intentions, it unveils unfound truths. The tool of language and communication appeared to be the field where the truth of things is composed. Logos is closer to the truth that our senses themselves are or the data collected by them. When logos is misused, whether out of ignorance or excessive pride(hubris) then it generates chaos instead of order. It plunges the world of values into darkness instead of lifting it to the light.

Virtue is ability. A virtuous general is a capable military leader, the one who is good at his abilities and serves his purpose. And ability for something can be possessed by someone who is properly aware and has deep knowledge of those things that produce such ability. But how do we get to know something so deeply and fully? By investigating it from all possible angles and using our intellect to judge it and analyze its characteristics; and finally composing from them its meaning by giving it its proper definition. A definition that consists its essence (το τι ἐστί). Only the doctor that knows the truth of his science and practicing medicine with pure heart, is a good doctor. Only the teacher that knows the truth of his teachings and is true to them, is a good teacher. Only a fighter that knows the depth of the act of fighting, is a good fighter. The use of these paradigms is not uncommon, Socrates says, this tactic is not only applicable to social practices but also to the abilities of our internal world, to the virtues of the soul (Canavero Mirko, Gray Benjamin, 2018)

This is the turning point for Socrates' moral and political theory. His point of reference is that virtue receives its value of goodness upon concentration of knowledge that bares ability. He is not simply restraining virtue to the sum of knowledge, but he is setting the bar in obtaining the highest qualification in order to practice a moral life. Knowledge that bares ability and leads to merit. His famous statement of self-knowledge; "Ὅτι οἶδ' ὅτι οὐδέν οἶδ' αἶ" > 'All I know is that I know nothing', proves a constant effort to learn and attain a moral state. Socrates accepted the fact of his ignorance and urged his fellow men to do the same. If virtue relies upon knowledge, then your level of awareness is your litmus test for entering a moral life. Discovering and admitting what you know and what you don't is the critical distinction of your existential course. A good General does

not only know the art of war but also bravery and mercy. A good politician does not only know how to excel in the art of rhetoric and diplomacy but also how to practice justice and providence.

Logos gives the necessary clarity to realize what you are aware of and what you are not. How someone must acquire the knowledge needed for them to be virtuous. This way virtue is identified via means of one's abilities and evil via one's inability to conform and acquire knowledge via ignorance. Socrates truly believes that no one is born evil. We do not choose a non-good state of ourselves voluntarily. Men commit evil acts out of ignorance and fallacious beliefs. If they receive the proper knowledge and if they are trained to be able to receive it then they will be good and not succumb to evil no more. Socrates viewed self-control as a battle of will. Everyone has the will to refrain from doing something. And if you didn't, you should strengthen your ideas of right and wrong until you have the power of self-control to do right. Our reason must remain firmly in control of our appetites, desires, and emotions. Self-control also applied to not being overly concerned, but concerned enough with your health, fitness, and so on (Durant, 1953).

The men who can reap knowledge and steadily acquire it are noble, just, brave and worthy. They become owners and keepers of the absolute valid and perfect knowledge; this wisdom is science itself. As Logos acquires the perfect knowledge, it was deemed the cornerstone of morality, the motive and interlock of the ethical life. The man that is aware and owner of the science of bad and wrong, is drawn towards goodness and avoids evil under any circumstances and conditions. No other concept or state, habit or custom can supersede the power of science and force upon men a way of life opposite that the one Logos suggests.

His theory was tested to its limits as the times that he lived in ancient Athens were difficult. The city-state was involved for almost thirty years in a civil war with the rest of the Greeks and the governing bodies were failing the Athenians. When the thirty Tyrants assumed power, Socrates realized that an immoral beast was at the city's reigns. He fought up against this dismantling of ethical living that threatened to crash the pillars of man's inner existence. It is usually after dark periods of civil war and oppressive regimes that revolutions are born along with great changes. In this instance, after the oligarchy of the Thirty tyrants the birth of true Democracy would take place during the golden Age of Pericles' rule in Athens. History itself endorsed this process numerous times; only after a great disaster or an intense upheaval of principles, new directions can be formed.

### The Socratic Method

During the Sophists' reign and the gradual decay of the democratic ideal in the hands of demagogues, Socrates was trying to teach and lead an ethical life. He urged the Athenians to awake from this political nightmare and fight against the laziness of the mind. In Plato's Dialogues, where his main character is his teacher-Socrates, he is practicing the dialectic method with the other characters. The dialectic method was a discourse between two or more people, named interlocutors, holding different opinions but striving to establish the truth through logical arguments. He used that method in order to test the abilities of his interlocutors and ultimately reach philosophical truths and conclusions. These dialogues offer us an insight to the political thought and moral behavior of the time. Socrates thinking may have been that both the internal and the external worlds were shifting constantly and in order to achieve some degree of stability we must have a compass. The only reliable compass in the face of flux is reason and one of the means to practice it was to argue. But not all men who used arguments to rationalize their thinking were going towards the right direction (Canavero Mirko, Gray Benjamin, 2018).

The Sophists were mainly arguing that if you had power you had the right to create laws and manage people. Specifically, in one of the most famous of the Dialogues 'Gorgias', the sophist Kalliklis condemned morality as an invention of the poor and the weak in order to diminish the strength of the powerful. The core of ethical behavior is justice; how we understand and practice it. Plato said, justice would have been something simple to have if people themselves were simple folk. He depicted a picture of a people that are peaceful, calm, minding their own businesses, working the earth to reap what they need to sustain themselves, enjoying the gifts of nature and appreciating the beauty around them, treating each other and all other living animals with respect. This description reminds us of a version of paradise or oasis that humans live in, a garden of Eden, a utopia. But why do these utopias never come to existence, Plato wonders. He attributes this chimeric failure to the prevalent human characteristic of greed. This evil drive that the Church Fathers incorporated in the seven deadly sins. Men are greedy and unsatisfied with a simple life. They seek comfort and luxury, chasing the concept of the 'good life'. A man is ambitious, envious, competitive; he quickly gets bored of what he already owns and desires what he does not have or what others have. First, he casts his eye on the neighbor's wife or his goods. Then he moves on to chase territories that other cities have; competing constantly to acquire more and thus he is



led to war. Such is the nature of man that he seeks the doom and destruction of his fellow men so that he can rise himself and conquer all (Papanoutsos, 2010).

## Plato

Plato was so disappointed with how morally bankrupt his fellow Athenians had become that they allowed the unjust conviction of his beloved teacher. Socrates was condemned to die during a public trial by drinking hemlock, a poisonous liquid. His charges were corruption of the Athenian youth with his revolutionary ideas for freedom and self-thinking. His criticism of the political system and the current moral values is evident throughout Plato's work where he is the main character in most platonic dialogues. The more he preached for the moral corruption and the foulness of the demagogues who manipulated the mob, the more he was targeted from the aristocracy and the sophists. Plato puts the interlocutors in his dialogues to contemplate the state of their city and evaluate the political system, reaching astounding conclusions showing the idiocy of the system that allowed anyone, with a witty spirit and a keen ability to speak to the sentiment of the audience, to climb the political ladder and manage the crowds to his will; leaving other worthy citizens to be subject to the wimps of the mob. A system so eroded that merit and transparency were undervalued and overlooked.

## Plato's Republic

According to Plato's theory, human behavior develops from three sources; the passion, the feeling and knowledge. These are biologically situated in our bodies. In his work Republic, Socrates is developing a relation between justice and eudaimonia. A whole moral system is crafted and emerges to serve the purpose establishing correct social and political functions for the state. Plato's philosophical concerns in this dialogue are both political and moral. In order to defend the position for a just life there is a variety of philosophical positions adjusted in a new moral theory that will ultimately bring to fruition the utopia of a perfect state filled with content citizens, in accordance with necessity and maximum happiness.

The Passion-source (thymiko) is in our lower abdomen, our gut; it brims of energy and tension, mostly sexual. Our primal appetites derive from there; our need to feed, drink, sleep and procreate. The second source is situated in our chests, it generates feelings. Located near our hearts and runs in our blood flow; it is the organic reflection of experience. And finally, the third source is situated in our head; the mind that outsources information, process it and generates

knowledge; becomes the 'pilot' of our soul, our inner essence. All these power-sources and their characteristics are common in all men. They all have them in different degrees (Coumoundouros, 2020)

Some men are fully governed by their passions. They have restless and greedy natures that make them subject to material pursuits and arousing conflicts; mostly unsatisfied as they are constantly after luxury and wealth demonstrations and possessions. These men are Masters of Production of goods and their spirit is frail, prone to addictions and earthly pleasures. Other men are overflowed with feelings and grit. Their nature is combative, even quarrelsome as they take pride in their strength and discipline. Their pleasure derives from the battles they must prepare for and win. Interested of the overall purpose, they enjoy the collisions, the fight. These men make good soldiers and wardens. And finally, we have the rare few that their joy in life is self-reflection and deep-thinking. Their cravings are not the shallow material world's offerings, nor the constant battle and pride of victories, but knowledge itself; the Logos. They are calm spirits who dwell in meditation and acquire deep understandings leading to states of wisdom. Their will is not fire or power but truth and light (Papanoutsos, 2010).

### The Republic's Laws

Plato classified men according to their will. He envisioned the perfect republic as the Athenian one had failed him and his teacher so miserably. His most famous work is the 'Republic', where nothing is left in chance and all serve a purpose according to their nature. He created order by classification of allocated citizenships so that the republic's needs to be served. The first and lower category is the productive force, the working force. The people whose character is driven by thumiko, farmers, tradesmen, craftsmen, merchants. The second class is the soldiers, the fighters, the ones who will keep the republic and all citizens secure, defend the ground. And finally, the head of state would be the philosophers, the guardians of the values and the truth.

Corruption of morals and disarray comes when people meant for a purpose, switch objectives or categories. When merchants blinded by greed seek more power and get involved in politics or seek military power, chaos disrupts peace. When ambitious generals use the army's strength to overthrow governments and seize power for themselves, that is how dictators are made. Both

classes without proper conditioning and guidance might reach lengths of destruction and death. Only the educated and properly cultivated can acquire their rightful place in the Republic. In this realm, the character and drive of a man is his merit. This is the cornerstone of Plato's Republic. There is also a big portion of the work dedicated to why the Republic's citizens will need to believe in God (Kraut, 2017).

The ideal Republic will have solid educational and social frameworks; a state of providence for its citizens, making possible the development and thriving of all its subjects. A moral framework is imperative for that goal. The members of this society need to respect one another, exercise courtesy and fulfill their duties. Since man is prone to gluttony, envy and wrath there must be a way to maintain or restrict these vices. Plato realized that constant policing on people doesn't bring the desired result. Sometimes we may even get a worse result by continuously trying to contain a rowdy crowd. What is needed is a well-structured set of rules that will condition behaviors and oil the machine of the Republic. The solution would be the validation of these rules or laws from a supernatural force that would not be controlled or explained. People tend to move on and render obsolete what has gathered meaning, as their hungry nature seeks the next fulfillment of their desires. Religion is a necessity. Plato believed that a functional republic cannot be strong without believing in God. Only a high ideal, so sacral that will remain unattained and mysterious can inspire devotion, fear, hope and duty. But a faceless god is unapproachable. Men will not easily relate and worship a force strong enough to mold their characters in a satisfying way to please him (Kraut, 2017). In the Republic, we find our first scripted moral argument for the necessary existence of god.

#### The necessary Divine Element

Here we have an explanation for the necessity of religion; the use and abuse of hope and the justification of idolatry. For man's arrogance is unmeasurable. Only a god that would look like him – or later in the Christian tradition a god that would create us to His image would suffice to inspire us and ignite faith and inspiration. Only a god like that would be acceptable to supervise us. Man would yield to a god that would consider him special, his child, a miracle. In return of this 'selection' he would make the effort to restrain himself from vices and out of admiration try to become closer to him. He could practice temperance, sobriety and self-discipline. And successfully people are

becoming more virtuous either out of fear or admiration; two sentiments that their genesis is rooted in the awe that god generates.

In addition, Plato ventured further in this philosophical religious analysis and remarked that keeping the gods happy in this life would grant citizens a continuance, an afterlife with immortality. The religious leaders since ancient times went into great lengths to set up a system that would serve their purpose. That purpose was the control of the masses and their constant obedience. A promise of a better life in the afterlife, after a virtuous life in the present would equip the believers with endurance for the hardships of their current lives and the loss of their beloved ones. In the same way Plato had to compose a coping mechanism and a process of instilling it. The psychology described in this work in order for all citizens to accept their fate and conform, is a familiar concept that was developed much later by Dr. Marston; it was called the DISC theory.

All human relationships break down into the interplay between dominance, inducement, submission and compliance. These states of emotion build our trust, hope, love and belief into someone or something. A person is most happy when they are submissive to a loving authority. It is essential that a person submits to an authority willingly, that it is their idea. People who simply comply instead of submitting are unhappy and repressed and this can lead to resentment; taken to its extremes can lead to crime, war, fascism (Dr. Marston, 1928)

## Aristotle

### Virtue Ethics

The theory of excellence that is primarily concerned with cultivation of traits in character that are essential to human flourishing, is called virtue ethics. The term was only coined in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in order to distinguish the theory from Utilitarianism and Consequentialism. The concept of virtue was famously introduced by Socrates in one of Plato's early Dialogues. He equated virtue with knowledge and evil with 'amathia' - ignorance. Self-awareness will lead to a certain level of wisdom that will dictate the right choice. And the sum of these choices will lead to 'eudaimonia' - happiness.

Aristotle led the virtue theory to its apotheosis with the 'Nicomachean Ethics'. He claimed that a person acts in accordance with their nature. The awareness of one's nature and practice of their talents will lead them to obtain a sufficient level of self-realization that will enable them to lead a competent life. He encouraged moderation in all things. For Aristotle, virtue was the middle ground, the 'golden mean', and vices were the extremes in both directions.

The differentiation of morality's division, the way Immanuel Kant realized it later, was deriving from the powerful ancient Greek philosophical current and mainly from Aristotle's theory. The pursuit of eudaimonia, the good conduct in life and the good living conditions were the goal of any self-respected citizen of the ancient city-states to the contemporary metropolitan cities. But what is eudaimonia? It is to try and become 'aristos' - the best at what you do. It's the where the etymological wording for aristocracy, aristocrats comes from; the best of the best, the privileged ones.

Aristotle was the pupil of Plato and the teacher of great Alexander. His philosophical background was major philosophical schools and theories. Plato that claimed virtue is the harmony between the part of the soul and before him Socrates that claimed virtue is knowledge of good and evil. Aristotle's method was teleology and the hierarchy of goods. Every activity or action aims at some end (telos) which is its good. There are two types of ends (telos). The intermediate, the one that which is done for the sake of something else and the final, the one that which is done for its own sake. The social sciences or knowledges (Episteme) are activities which aim at an end. This end could be one of the following: economic -the orderly economy of the household and state, strategy -victory in battle, rhetoric -persuading people to believe you, medicine -health off the body and politics which is the highest form -incorporates all the social sciences as it is the greatest knowledge. The goal of politics is happiness, eudaimonia; flourishing and development.

## Virtue and Eudaimonia

The moral theory of Aristotle, similarly to the one of his teacher's Plato, concentrates on the concept of virtue. The virtuous way of life is intertwined with happiness. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle tries to define happiness by tying it down to excellent activity of the soul. By excellent activity of the soul, we mean the moral virtues that compose it. By virtue, the philosopher means practical wisdom, which is achieving excellence in our way of thinking and deciding how to behave and when. Here, Aristoteles's definition of practical wisdom is somewhat vague.

Aristotle begins his ethical theory by identifying the highest good as happiness itself. He immediately notes the variations of the concept. He explains that there are some people who think that a happy life is the life of enjoyment, others think that it is an active political life, and there are those who think that it is the life of a scholar or a practitioner of theoretical contemplation. For the latter two, the results from their choices of conceptual happiness would not be in the life of enjoyment of the bodily pleasures, rather than that of political activity, the honor and social recognition(virtues). He claims that the object of a life of study is philosophical or scientific understanding (wisdom/virtue). According to him happiness is a state that denotes the most complete possible end (telos). The end of someone's life should reach that point.

In addition, Aristotle argues that in the account of happiness there is a dependent element that is equated with the notion of function or work (ergon). A warrior has a function to fight, a writer has a function to write. The better the function and the ability to perform, the better is accumulated for the warrior or the writer making them themselves good. A good knife attributes its ability to be good by how well it cuts, how well it serves its purpose, which is cutting (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1999).

## The soul

For Aristotle the soul of a man is divided in two parts: One that has reason directly end and the second one that obeys reason. He then, argues, that seems the function of a human is to exercise the soul's activities according to reason, the function of a good human is to exercise them well, meaning fine, in the best possible way he can. Virtues are developed habits of powers disposing agents to good actions. Because human actions are those acts that are subject to the rule of human reason and will, the human virtues reside in the various powers that are subject to the rule of reason and will (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1999).

The conditions of the soul are either feelings (*pathe*), capacities for feelings (*dynameis*) or dispositions (*hexeis*). Feelings are such things as hunger fear appetite and conditions that are producing pleasure or pain. Capacities are the ability to have feelings. Finally, this position is the condition of the soul where we are intrinsically prompted towards specific feelings. Virtue is a condition of the soul will be one of these three. In everything that is continuous and divisible it is possible to take more less on an equal amount; Aristotle here refers to feelings and is technically attempting to measure them. For example, we can measure a man's temper in feeling too much (displeased with something), not enough (indifferent) or a balanced amount (peaceful pleasure). So do you have a feeling at the right time ,on the right occasion , for the right purpose, towards the right people in the right manner is to feel the precisely right amount of what is necessary; the mean between extremes of excess and deficiency, this is the mark of moral virtue in the scale.

### The Golden Mean

Virtue for Aristotle is a mean between extremes of action, the extremes being vices. A virtuous man is the one who can balance his feelings in the middle mark, the famous 'golden mean'. Virtue is generating morality as it is a condition for its existence. It also makes more visible the link between morality and happiness. While happiness is excellent itself or a virtuous activity of the soul, the moral virtue is a disposition to achieve the mark between two extremes in feeling and in action. This perfect balance of feelings and actions in a perpetual virtuous is what grants *eudaimonia*. (Barnes, 1984)

Men learn to be virtuous through habituated moral action (*exis/habit*). Human virtue is the sole state which enables achievement of the human function. Aristotle was able to form a theory that in an imaginary depiction of an axon, where in its extremities produced only vices and, in the middle, -the golden mean- produced virtues. The named 'golden mean' was the perfectly balanced framework that everyone should strive to operate within. In order to achieve this middle ground, we have to aim at excess or deficiency which are the two opposite ends that produce vices. Depending upon managing the right circumstances and expressing the right sides of our personality, we will find ourselves in the middle where the golden mean lies (Papanoutsos, 2010).

Aristotle, like most ancient Greeks, believed that all human activities aim at happiness which means to flourish or to do well by conducting a good life, a virtuous life. It must therefore be the

highest good. The highest good will be self-sufficient, living in itself. If happiness is the highest good, we cannot seek it for the sake of something else. Happiness can be pleasure, it can be wealth, it can be the feeling of honor and ultimately, it is virtue.

Aristotle established the existence of four kinds of beings having a soul that inhabited the human world. The first kind was the nutritive one -biological life itself (plants). The second was the sensate one (sentient beings/animals). The third was the political one (bees and ants/tribes/groups/social structure) and the final one was the rational kind, which are the humans. Humans are rational animals; they can conduct one's life according to reason, and this is what it means to be human. As beings, humans have the opportunity to achieve human excellence. This can happen if they possess intellectual virtue-the discipline of the mind that it is acquired through education (paedagogia).

The philosopher claimed that acting morally is not the same as being moral; for example, performing moral actions is insufficient to cast someone a status of a moral person. His conditions of attributing moral status on someone were as follows: One must have knowledge of what is moral, as Socrates claimed before Aristotle, ignorance is amoral. One must will the moral action; you must desire to choose the right thing as there is no accidental morality. One must act out of a consistent character - there is no occasional morality (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1999).

### Logos, Pathos, Ethos.

Nearly 2.300 years ago, Aristotle in his work 'Rhetoric' developed the modes of persuasion for successful dominance over a dialogue, a speech or a monologue. This elaborate assertive psychographic technique was used in the Greek tragedies, in theater and as a persuasion mode by the Sophists, in politics. Ethos, Pathos, Logos adhere to the three levels that human are consisted from; the passions, the feelings and the faculties. Plato analyzed how our thymico (located in the rear abdomen) is responsible for our instincts and appetites, our soul or heart that is generating our moods and emotions. And finally, our mind; the faculties that are inhabited by Logos and can practice vice and virtue. Logos is also the name of God for the Gnostics, the first of the Christians who possessed the first knowledge of God. In the new Testament God is called 'Logos' (Word). The Apostle John is clear in his text, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1-3 (NIV))



### Justice is being reasonable

In Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle distinguishes between two kinds of justice: the legal justice or conventional and the natural justice. Natural justice is independent of specific laws and applies to all people everywhere. However, this distinction is not made on the grounds of changeability. When it comes to the natural laws are historical claims that there is an inner principle that is subject to time. There are changes that are natural because they are due to the work of inner principles which govern its development and eventual decay, the same way nature works for a plant (organic growth) or an animal. They are to be separated from changes that are product of external factors whether these factors are beneficial or detrimental, for example human intervention on ground formation so in order to contrast Plato's view Aristotle claims that there are natural or real laws that are changeable. These changes occur as a result of the natural inner workings of a being. Human beings also grow and mature overtime as active beings that can will active actions in the light of rational understanding. They are differentiated from other active beings that cannot will their actions and are simply beasts, animals. This active action based on rational thinking is the mark that separates humans from beasts. It is the most fully human characteristic: our rationality. Thus, if we are to determine what is human nature what is the inner principle governing human life, it is reason itself (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 2000).

## The Theological origin

### The Divine Command theory

The most widespread belief in the world throughout history is the theory that morality derives from God. The Divine Command theory supports the belief that what is moral and what is immoral is commanded by the Divine. Here the moral good is identified with god's will or with what god commands. In its strongest form it identifies the word good with what God wills and is. And thus, it falls in a contradictory implication where is the apparent fact that many people have beliefs about what is morally good without having the appropriate beliefs about what God has willed (Berg, 1991).

The divine command theory remained the ruling moral theory for more than 3000 years. People unable to explain natural forces or disasters and by attributing them to the divine or the unseen they accepted and obeyed a mysterious authority that was rewarding and punishing them accordingly. Christianity conquered all known western world and ruled unbothered for the first millennia. It is historically true that only after the 16th century, true philosophical quests over the issues of morality, existence, religion, free will and our subconscious bloomed. Concentrated in the timeline from the middle ages to the dawn of the 21st century we have some of the most prominent philosophical work.

### Natural Law Theory

The natural law theory proposes that as physical laws of nature exist, so do universal moral laws. God is the creator of nature and man. He has crafted our realm and humans in a way that we understand what good and evil is. We are predisposed by our nature, as God created us, towards goodness (Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas believed the same). When people do not choose to follow their intuitive good instincts and they sin, or they do evil it is because of their ignorance and flux of emotion. Thomas Aquinas grounds morality in our shared nature with God. He distinguishes the following basic goods: life, reproduction, educate one's offspring, seek God, live in a society, avoid offence and get along with others, shun ignorance- know what is best for us. He also recognizes qualities for non-human animals and states qualities reserved only for humans. (Aquinas, A Summary of Philosophy, 2003)

In order to grasp the interplay between natural law and ethics, we will have to explain the central thrust of natural law by tracing its history. The seeds of natural law ethics are normally attributed

to Aristotle. There are evident traces in Plato's. There is a debate between Plato and Aristotle that gives a very good idea of what the theory of natural law is. The focus of the debate was the contrast between two concepts thought to be crucial in the inadequate understanding of human affairs: *nomos* and *physis*.

*Nomos*, from which we have the English words such as autonomy, refer to the practices established in the society, whether customs or positive laws, which depend for their existence entirely on the legislative actions of human beings. These can vary from society to society and even within a single society are subject to change overtime. What was *nomos* (law) was changeable. In contrast, *physis*, from which we get the word physics, referred to what was unchangeable: nature or reality.

The contrast between the two notions was employed by the Sophists in order to distinguish the human world from the unchanging natural order. According to them, the human world and human society with its institutions including its ethics and moral beliefs, was a world of changed variety conventions of *nomos* rather than *physis*. Plato however held that there is an unchanging moral reality largely ignorant, that human societies with their great powers and variety of conventional practices. Knowledge of goodness depends on being able to penetrate the veil of appearances to the hidden unchanging reality of the forms. Plato rejects the idea that morals and law are purely conventional. Human behavior is subject not only to established social ruling, but first and foremost to an unwritten law whether imposed by the gods to men or even gods themselves are subject to it (as Sophocles indicates in his tragedy *Antigone*). The idea of natural law is sometimes described as the view that there is an unchanging normative order that is a part of the natural world (Papanoutsos, 2010).

### [The relation between Religion and ethics](#)

When we discuss ethics, religion is an unavoidable topic since it addresses the ultimate questions of metaphysics and morality. The religions that conquered the world since ancient times- Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism -draw elements from these ancient thinkers and their teachings and incorporated them in their dogmas. Immanuel Kant, after evaluating these dogmas and the social demands, concluded that the primary concern of morality should not be to obtain this form of happiness, truth or completeness but the exploration and identification of the highest authority of morality that regulates all else. The purpose of man is determined by this definition. By discovering the set of morality, we understand truths that were unknown to us. By living a

moral life, we are driven to man's utmost and final purpose; to a completion, an end, a union with the holly.

The Fathers of religious faiths, some religious leaders or even prophets understood very early in time the importance of feelings and their interplay in our will and actions. Some of the best representation of the most successful moral systems can be studied in religious dogmas. Until some years ago ethics was a science studied as part of religious Ethics. The world turned to Ecclesiastes and people of the cloth for the important questions in life. There are moral codes embedded in the core of the faith, placed meticulously to educate the believers and followers into becoming moral agents of the faiths' appropriate conduct of life. We see systems of punishment and reward. These are certain measures the Church has taken to keep the believer's soul pure; seclusion, fasting, conversion, withdrawal, custody of activities or senses (seeing temptation, touching, speaking, socializing), meditation and prayer, confession, vows (chastity, silence) and many more. As the Socratic method, religious dogma teaches us that if we can drive a life with control over our urges, we can be content and have God's blessing.

Christianity as well as other religions, set the rewards of a good life to the afterlife. Trying to drive a moral life was demanding, hard and almost impossible for the simple folk, working class, uneducated or misfortune ones. The brutality of life back then and the chance of dying was so high that people were not mainly concerned with the idea of leading a virtuous life. So, religion created some protective frameworks that educated in a way the believers and provided the guidelines for a virtuous course in mortal life (prayers, fasting, confession, liturgy, penance). It shifted the highest good/telos to the hereafter and prescribed the condition of a moral life to its followers in order to serve social and control purposes. The believer by driving a life that was according to the teachings of his faith he was going through a process of preparation and demonstration of his/her worthiness to receive the "rewards" of his/her god/gods. Most religions prescribed a depriving character in their pilgrims' lives. Things that produced intense pleasure were prohibited and a level of abstinence was required (MacCulloch, 2010).

As is well known leading an ethical life is demanding, and some of the choices one must make are coming against his personal interest or advancement in life. But they do serve a higher purpose or good. Making this choice can be unpleasant and even sometimes at a terrible personal cost (sacrifice). Immanuel Kant believed that our willing commitment to duty would made things

simpler for us as we would have to abide by our own accord to a noble path. So that whatever the costs we may have to pay, would leave us satisfied knowing we did our duty; we honored our choice and code. Having knowledge of our duty, what is the right thing to do, and our volition towards it will supersede our fear(passion) of personal loss(sacrifice). The ordinary terms: should, needs, ought, must, acquired this special sense by being equated to -in the relevant contexts- with “is obliged”, “is required to”, in the sense in which one can be obliged by law or a higher legal authority. The statement ‘I believe in God’ has no objective meaning, but it means something in context, like any statement delivered by a specific community. Subsequently, there is not one fixed meaning or idea contained in the word God; the word contains a whole spectrum of meanings. Language fails to convey absolute meaning for simpler notions than the one of God. The reality that we call ‘God’ exceeds all human expression and intelligibility (Kant, God and Immortality as postulates of Pure Reason, 2013).

### Religion is a moral code

Religion has incorporated moral codes in its dogma and is itself a moral framework with ethical tenets that people operate within. It provides purpose, a community, a way of life, it has a rewarding system and offers office positions, the same as a sociopolitical system does. Morality demands sacrifice. And a sacrifice can be anything that is willingly given or laid down that involves personal cost or loss in various levels. By offering ourselves we come closer to what we feel our purpose is. The end/telos in a human's life that involves his purpose and completion. These offerings can be many things, from exercising chastity, dedication to god, practice monastic or ascetic life; training and preparing oneself. Only through constant practice, through tests or ordeals that are brought upon us we can prove our worthiness and our endurance. This training will deem us capable of the desired union with the creator or the truth we unceasingly seek. The ascetic life is a well-developed extension of the Stoic philosophical take on virtuous living. By removing the temptations life has to offer, dedicated in prayer and contemplation, men and women are training their bodies and souls for in order to cast a glimpse to the eternal truths, to be united with their maker, the Beloved.

As I discussed before, Logos as an ancient Greek concept for our mind, essence and state was the first important concept for some of the most vital philosophical points of reference in History. Religion did acknowledge its grave significance and effect. «Εγώ είμαι ο Λόγος», «Στην Αρχή ην

ο Λόγος...»> “In the beginning there was Logos” (John 1:1-3 (NIV)). The Evangelist's John (Ioannis) narrative begins that way; with a chant in which Logos is the Greek word for word. The word, says John, was God and became human flesh and dwelt among men, full of grace and truth. Logos in this context doesn't mean a single particle of speech, in further analysis and subject matter it is of grave importance to define the concept, the use of it and its development throughout time until nowadays. In order to do that we have to search back in history, specifically Greek history. Christianity, the dominant religion between ancient Greek classics (Aristotle, Plato, the Stoics) and today. What this religion did to assign (further) value on the words and validate by Holy Spirit/the Divine the concepts of good and evil. Morality is validated by the highest moral authority, God.

### Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas synthesized the Aristotelian virtue and Christian ethic in order to produce his version of moral theory. Deeply influenced by Aristotle and Augustine he proceeded by emphasizing the ends (telos) given to humans is the natural order. For him the primary moral values are hope and love, values that are the cardinal and the theological virtues of faith. The rules governing how we ought to live are known to us; some of them by revelation others by ordinary natural experience in rational reflection. Aquinas believed that God requires us to do only what is consistent with our good nature, as his creatures we are predisposed towards this consistency.

The Greek concept of virtue was also incorporated in religion in the later centuries. The Church adopted the distinction of the four cardinal virtues from Socrates time (Prudence, Fortitude, Temperance, Justice) as part of its core dogmas. A virtuous life was what a good Christian must follow and desire. Thomas Aquinas, the Father of the Catholic Church, with his teachings in 'Summa Theologiae' in 1274 incorporated officially the virtue theory into the Christian moral theory. And as Socrates paired virtue of wisdom reached through knowledge with the vice of ignorance, the Catholic Church presented the seven virtues as practice against the seven deadly sins.

### The doctrine

Thomas moral doctrine is primarily virtue based. Human beings always act for an end that produces a result. A good action begins in desire of a state or a thing and ends in satisfaction of its completion, acquiring the thing or entering the state. The final achievement or acquisition of

the good (Agathon) which was desired is the purpose of this course of action. Good human conduct proceeds from inside us under the control of rational and will. As human beings we may have various appetites that are communicated by our senses or our intellect, but this does not mean we are solely subject to those appetites. The appetites that are communicated and controlled by our senses create urges and desires in us. The other ones that are informed by our intellect and rationale are the rational appetites. These appetites drive human action and consist the apprehension of some evident good that generates the desire for reproducing it. The will is a rational appetite. Actions performed are deemed as good or bad in relation to the human good (Agathon) they produce, for which they are either conducive or detrimental (Aquinas, A Summary of Philosophy, 2003).

### Agathon

For Aquinas, one acts well or good when he has done something that is good in every respect. The one singular ultimate human good (Agathon) that provides the classification of all other human goods is happiness, or eudaimonia as Aristotle put it; as Aquinas refers to it in Latin, it is 'beatitudo'. When he tried to analyze the human good (Agathon) he employed the so-called function argument. The way that we appraise or judge a flute player by his ability to play the flute or how well he plays the flute, the activity itself, the same way we should be able to judge and appraise everyone on the basis of a certain characteristic that will function as the measure their ability to reach a certain state of goodness.

### Aquinas happy ending

The activity that sets the human agent apart from all others is rational activity. The agents act knowingly and willingly. If that is the human function, then the human being who performs it the best possible way will be a good person and a happy person. Aquinas in his masterpiece, 'Summa Theologiae', claims that there is one single telos (end) for every human that is able to become happy. He proceeds to the distinction of the two aspects of happiness; the imperfect happiness of this life and the perfect happiness of the afterlife, where we will be in perfect union with God. In Aquinas' account, the first happiness that can be achievable by a human agent in this life it is simple as an exercise of the powers he has by nature. There is though, a different happiness that is not to be found perfectly in this life only in the next one and it can be only attained by supernatural assistance. It consists of a glimpse of the Divine and all things "in" God. Contrary to what the philosophers hoped to aspire to in so far, by attaining eternal happiness from struggling to 'know' God through his effects and interpret his will through scripture or signs, Aquinas offers

an alternative opportunity for the eternal bliss (beatitudo) (Aquinas, A Summary of Philosophy, 2003).

In the hereafter, man participates in a glorious union with God that leads to the utmost experience of joy and peace. A few centuries later, Baruch Spinoza would develop his theory of Ethics by using the geometrical method to explain belief in God, reason and emotions. According to his concept the philosopher claims that in the finest hour of life and quest in afterlife, man seeks the '*fruitio Dei*', the union with God (the term belongs to Augustine that addressed this type of union in his work). He speaks of a relationship of love with God '*amor Dei intellectualis*'. The '*fruitio Dei*' is the intellectual love with God which equals the highest good, eudaimonia. When this mental state is reached then man can glimpse god. He acquires insight. Only then man unites with the Beloved, his maker and enters a state of perpetual bliss and love. Aquinas developed this in his work and in simple accessible language he described the process and the state of happiness (Aquinas, On Law, Morality and Politics, 2002)

#### Two types of happiness

This critical distinction between the two kinds of happiness someone can achieve in two separate realms reveal the differentiation between natural virtues and theological virtues. Natural virtues are the ones that lead to happiness of this life, being limited and adjusted to human nature. Theological virtues penetrate the afterlife and lead to the second level of happiness, that is a supernatural good life in union with God. The natural virtues are divided into moral virtues and intellectual virtues. The moral virtues are the habits that lead to a perfected image of a human with good appetites and his capability to perform the right use of those appetites. The intellectual virtues exercise and lead to perfection the intellect of man and contribute to his aptitude of the apprehension of truth. He separates virtues in two sections. The cardinal natural virtues are Courage, Justice, Prudence and Temperance. The theological virtues are Faith, Hope and Love. They cannot be acquired by human effort only and are instilled by God's grace (Aquinas, On Law, Morality and Politics, 2002)

#### Aquinas' Laws

For Aquinas, Natural Law is a system that firstly entails an eternal state of flourishing of rational beings and can be naturally known by rational creatures. The second part entailed, is a set of obligations the creature must abide with, and they are delivered by a divine force. The existence of Natural Law signifies a rational being's obligation to follow or refrain from doing certain things.



He must also recognize that these obligations do not derive from an artificial source or human legislator. Moral knowledge is communicated by divine revelation and sometimes intervention, this is called by Aquinas 'The Divine Law'. In the context of this law, the rational beings as created by God's image are able to participate in this holy process. Here, the Friar distinguishes the importance of the Divine Law in contrast to the Natural Law (Aquinas, A Summary of Philosophy, 2003).

The Natural Law directs us to perform actions we usually perform in order to flourish in this life as humans. The divine Law on the other hand provides rules to follow for us to be consistent with the will of God and grant us an after-life union with the divine. Someone cannot possibly follow only the Divine Law as both laws are subsequent to each other and someone must conform to the Natural Law before abiding to the Divine Law. For Aquinas the natural law theory is natural because it is in accordance with human nature and the human nature is a rational one. The Natural Law Theory was widely adopted and flourished especially at the times after it was developed as Christianity was still the ruling religion in most of the known world. The Catholic Church adopted its tenets and produced its core dogma around it. Of course, the theory finds no application to unbelievers in any form of the divine and its moral structure cannot offer guidelines to secular thinkers (Aquinas, A Summary of Philosophy, 2003).

### The Euthyphro Dilemma

In one of Plato's most well-known dialogues 'Euthyphro' we see one of the most devastating critiques on the divine command theory. In the dialogue stars Socrates and his interlocutor of the day is Euthyphro. The story is that the two men met outside the Athenian Court awaiting each their respective trials. Socrates is preparing his defense against the charges of youth corruption and not holding the appropriate beliefs for the gods. As he engages with Euthyphro in dialogue, he is astounded to find out that the young Athenian was there to bring murder charges against his own father! The two men begun to discuss on how we know what is moral and what is not. Euthyphro believes that the gods will be pleased with his actions as he thinks that prosecuting his own father is the right thing since it is what gods command. Socrates is skeptical and poses a couple of questions invoking the dialectic method in order to unveil a problem that will help both men in their decisions. The famous 'Euthyphro problem', also known as 'Euthyphro Dilemma', is still an unsolved situation even among contemporary philosophers, as it consists of two options that both lead in unpleasant results and in our case, inconclusive.

The hypothesis of the problem is the attempt to define pious -good; what is pious and why. The problem has two propositions and goes like this; right actions are good because god commands them; and right actions are commanded by god, because they are good. Now, if we follow the first proposition, that right actions are pious because they are commanded by the divine, we understand that something is good only because god wills it. He is the sole source of morality and we must follow his word no matter what. We are accepting that god's commands alone are what make an action good/pious. Meaning, that god defines goodness. This leads to conclusions that god's commands and any morality stemming out of them are arbitrary and can change at any time according to his will.

If we take the second preposition, that right actions are commanded by god because they are good, then it means there is a standard of goodness outside god's realm and all divine forces have to abide with it when making commandments. So, morality is grounded to another source other than god and his effect to piousness becomes secondary. God is no longer omnipotent and there are things that he cannot command. If god commands orders to his creations because they are right in themselves, making him a high authority of validating these commands why should that minimize the moral worth of them or the credibility of his will. William Lane Craig, like many apologetics, claims in his defense of God's existence, that the Euthyphro dilemma is false. He argues that God could never command anything else but good actions for He is good in Himself. His nature is goodness so anything deriving from his will is pious.

### Objections

This theory is not applicable to everyone, as there are also non-believers. The implication between the statements: 'God commands what is good' and 'God commands what he commands' is an obvious illusory religious fanaticism. We have to be able to discern if a God-given command is not moral, the same way we could grasp if our father commanded us to do something wrong.

We also have the following issue: If morality is subject to god's will, right actions are good because God commands them. If God is commanding actions because they are good, he is no longer omnipotent. Then something outside God in some sense binds him into making commands that

have good character. If there is another source other than God, then he is not omniscient. That other sources know better, so God commands the actions that this other source has produced as good. If the ethical rules come from some other source other than God, then why can't we just go straight to that source and figure out morality for ourselves the same way God did. The final observation here in relation to good and evil deriving from god, would be that evil is in its nature a human notion. God could not have commanded anything that is 'not-good' as he has no human nature.

### Good and Evil

What is evil and where is it coming from. Good and evil were born simultaneously, like two opposite ends. They were born the minute we could understand the concept of it. And like all things in Nature they developed alongside each other, like a system, a dyad, a taxonomy. The balance between good and evil little had to do with God or as we know of. The works of culture, organized religion and inexplicable mysteries formed and defined the concept of evil. Once an action that causes harm occurs, the rest of actions that prevent it, fight it, rectify it, avoid it were deemed the opposite of harmful. In a simple newly formed rational mind, almost like a child's, it is as simple as that.

### Knowledge of Evil

Religion appealing to the sentiment and yearning of a dreamy life in its followers offered a beautifully crafted story, almost out of a dream. A garden full of all the goods; appealing, pure, childlike innocence and most importantly full of God's love. Man and woman child alike enjoying all fruits of paradise but one. In Genesis the fruit from the forbidden tree is called the knowledge fruit. The snake that deceives Eve presents its case well; 'that fruit will grant you knowledge and power'. From ancient times knowledge was limited to few and its power was considered God-given. So, the apple of knowledge symbolized the seed of conscience. Man could feel now more, understand more and want more. That fruit symbolizes our passing as innocent children to adults, from the paradise of childhood to the reality of grown-ups.

Was evil born the second Adam took a bite from the apple in the garden of Eden or did it appear in the form of a snake? The apple of wisdom is the seed of cognition. We can now reflect on our actions and those of others. We feel one another and the world. Unpredictability of emotional connections that climax and fulfill or destroy our inner self. Creativity and complex thought granted man his superiority on all other species. The highly sophisticated functions of the mind allowed

him to dominate the planet. But the most important element that man received from the fruit of the knowledge, was empathy. What the forbidden fruit gave us was exactly what the tree's name was promising, knowledge. Now we would know how everything feels; good, evil, shame, anger, hope, happiness, love.

Empathy; en=inside, from within and pa-thos (= the suffering) <pas-exwn= the state of feeling everything, and as an extension suffering as well. And so, we received the blessing and the curse of feeling every single thing; the capacity to be overwhelmed by feelings that delight or deprive. Exposed to all feelings now along with the hardships of life and against the forces of Nature, man's quest for the truth begun. His thirst for knowledge and truth, his hunger for love, his predisposition towards goodness, his need to create order out of chaos, his frailty against time, the release or suppression of his urges, the corruption of the soul. All of the above composed his human nature through time.

According to psychologist M. Schulman, moral motivation derives, while we grow up, from three individual sources: the arousal of empathy, our moral affiliations and the commitment to principles. As aforementioned, empathy is the most intense of our emotional properties. It can render us capable of unique connections to other living beings. The more similar we believe the others are to us the more we connect and empathize or sympathize with them. And accordingly, behave well towards them (Schulman, 2002).

It is known that man is the only being capable of evil. We can observe traces or whole sets of actions of altruism in other animals within the herd they belong, within their own kind but also in some occasions between different species. It is believed that animals have no concept of evil. Evil is a human construct. In nature there is order and causality. Everything has a reason for happening and has a place in Nature's order. Evil is a byproduct from active elaborate thought.

### The Problem of Evil

Immanuel Kant in his work, 'The Metaphysics of Morals', is presenting a form of evil that exists outside religions' domain. This form of radical evil that exists beyond the limits of reason and will is not something that our faith to God can vanquish anymore, but we can fight it with our reason. And so, Kant releases the concept of evil from Church's grasp to the secular world. Ricoeur has

an interesting opinion about what evil is and what is a possible solution to it. He is analyzing the concept of a malicious notion that was educated to us through time. We can conceive evil through the realm of myth of extensive narratives that express collective human experiences. Myth is not false; rather it encapsulates truth about subjects like evil -and other abstract notions- that cannot be perceived fully through reason alone. Because evil exists beyond the limits of reason what matters for Ricoeur is not the act committed per se, but the reaction or response to it; the experience of the receiver as a spectator (direct/indirect reception) or as a victim. Separating evil perpetrated from evil suffered, shifts the concern from 'what' or 'who' is evil to the best possible action in the face of it, which according to him is not a solution, but a response (Paulikas, 2017). "The problem of evil can be expressed in theological or secular terms, but it is fundamentally a problem about the intelligibility of the world as a whole" (Nieman, 2002).

Often people have struggled with the idea of evil. Whether it is simply a manifestation of our vile parts or a natural occurrence that we cannot accept and vilify. Are we the creators of our demons? Many scholars have addressed the named 'problem of Evil' in an attempt to answer two of the most important questions of all times. The first question is, if there is a God why he allows for such evil to consume us (inclusive in the question is whether or not god exists). The second question is, what is that evil (and where does it come from), what is the proper response to evil, how do we prevent it or fight it? Recent history and philosophy have taught us that violence is the surest outcome of blithely ascribing the quality of evil to another. At best, this process may supplant the thing we brand evil for a time, but the notion that evil can be destroyed is an ethical version of a fool's errand (Catapano & Critchley, 2017). There is a high demand for more clarity in our common understanding of evil.

### Reason and Belief in God – Plantinga

The evidentialists believed that it is wrong always and everywhere to put faith or accept something that lacks evidence or has insufficient proof. Plantinga's reforming epistemologies tried to challenge that view. According to the evidentialists even if it is true that God exists one must be considered a rationalist for believing in him without any evidence or opted proof. Only beliefs that are properly basic do not require evidence. Plantinga wishes to pose the question why believing in God can't be a properly basic belief. There is no good reason for not considering this possibility. There are plenty of things in which we believe without proof and in doing so we seem entirely justified even without appealing to evidence. There is no evidence available to prove that self-

evident beliefs are properly basic. The key to Plantinga's reformed epistemologies is warrant: "the property that turns mere belief into knowledge when possessed in sufficient degree ". The appropriate circumstances or faculty that form the belief that God exists in people can be described by the sense of the divine (Sensus Divinitatis). In this context the philosopher provides the four criteria for warrant : firstly the agent must have all his cognitive faculties functioning properly , secondly where is the appropriate cognitive environment , thirdly the sole purpose of the epistemic faculty is aimed at producing true beliefs and finally the objective probability of a belief being true is high. According to this analysis we can conclude that belief in God is properly basic when it comes to warrant if God exists. God's existence is no longer epistemic but metaphysical or theological and can be justified independently of evidence (James, 2020).

### Theodicy

Leibnitz was a German philosopher and mathematician. He never actually wrote a treatise on morality, but he contributed on the theory of good in his work 'Theodicy'. He claimed that theology was a type of jurisprudence. And a science of law. His main work theodicy was written at 1700's AD. He follows a natural law theory, a theory of the good and the theory of the law. God is the measure of the good. The primary directive of ethics in this theory is: "I owe to imitate divinity as far as possible ".

### The theory of the Good

Leibnitz follows three doctrines; first is the platonic view that goodness is coextensive with reality or being. Second is the perfectionist view that the highest good consists in the perfection of one's nature. Third is the hedonist view that the highest good is pleasure. He argues that the 'good' has three parts: one is the metaphysical good, second is the moral good and third is the physical good, which derives to reality versus the metaphysical evil /nonbeing. He is analyzing virtue versus sin /vice and pleasure versus the physical evil of pain.

#### 1.Uniting goodness with reality (where reality is perfection)

Reality is not that sort of thing that something has or has not. It is not an all or nothing matter. Rather it comes in varying degrees. God has maximum perfection infinite amount because he is limitless (monadology). Every existent other than God including the universe, possesses a limited degree of perfection. Because nothing done God is infinite everything else exhibits metaphysical

perfection in varying limited degrees. Since everything but God exhibits a finite level of perfection everything, but God also exhibits a level of imperfection deprivation. The provision of reality belongs or is part of the creation in the sense that it is logically impossible for it created thing to be unlimited. Only that whose existence is absolutely necessary and therefore depends on nothing other than itself has infinite perfection. For Leibnitz metaphysical evil is the perversion /deprivation of reality inherent in the natures of created things!

## 2. Virtue is acting according to wisdom

Yet one virtue in particular reigns Supreme and contains all others and that virtue is justice.

The “charity of the wise man “, the one whose love is guided by wisdom possesses the charity of the wise. Love is the pleasure one takes in the happiness and perfection of others. God's wisdom is infinite, and his love is universal, extending to all beings capable of happiness. God’s universal benevolence, Leibnitz suggests, God's universal benevolence is an ideal we ought to do our best to imitate and continuously aspire to. the more one’s benevolence expands to include more and more others, the more one grows in justice and virtue, thereby increasing in moral goodness.

## 3.The physical good thus bridge is the moral good with a metaphysical good.

It links virtue and harmony because for Leibnitz, knowledge is the perception of knowledge of. Pain on the other hand is the knowledge of imperfection. A sensual pleasure such as of listening to music or that a viewing a painting is a confused perception of perfection. In contrast an intellectual pleasure such as the pleasure of knowing the fundamental order of reality is a distinct perception of perfection. Sensual pleasures in some cases approximate intellectual pleasures but they never fall short because they tend to be deceptive or transient where intellectual pleasures are pure and lasting. And for Leibnitz, true happiness is a lasting state of pleasure.

## Theology and morality

An interesting analysis of our ‘idea’ of god is argued in Gordon D. Kaufman’s essay on ‘Mystery, God and Constructivism’. The author begins by providing the etymology of the word theology that derives from the two Greek words theos(god) and logos(words/thoughts), meaning ‘talking about

god' or 'thinking of god'. Although, we talk about many things that are either objects, other living things or ideas and concepts somehow represented in behaviors or effects we can see (witnessed at some point); God is the one of the things we talk about or think about without ever have seen or witnessed. Unlike objects, he cannot be pointed at or described with physiological terms, for god is not directly perceivable by us (Moore, 2013, pp. 11-22).

Kaufman concentrates on the way the concept of god was formed and used. Our understanding of god has been generated by the uncharted territories of our imagination, which was employed as a means, not as a source. To say that we had to provide a sort of 'imaginative' construct to our mind, in order for it to process this 'idea' of god and embed it in our reality. Throughout history theologians and historians have argued that our knowledge of god is through analogies or stories and symbols. He is not something that can be discussed or described by experience. By this collective effort of putting together parallelisms and analogies we managed to form an 'image' of god that can be somewhat comprehended by our limited perception, but has developed into a complex symbol that is constantly subject to new interpretations. The issue here is that all these analogies we have processed on our attempt to form god's 'idea' have derived from our study of the bible. And the bible is an anthology, a collection of stories by different writers and henceforth, different perspectives (Moore, 2013, pp. 11-22).

Kaufman discusses a series of problems arising from the use of the word 'god' and its meaning through time, as well as the hermeneutics of the scripts and their problematic results. He argues that the complication continues as the readers of the bible interpret its text or meanings according to their cultural background and absorb different elements the one from the other. There is, of course, some common ground that officially has been reached from theologians and the Church that has guided and developed the official dogmas of Christianity (Eastern Orthodox, Catholicism, Protestantism etc.). There were so many arising issues though in the meanings, definitions, interpretations and 'guidelines' deriving from the bible that through history resulted to a series of all kinds of sects and a variety of 'different' churches that prove just that; as a human 'product' the holy Book is subject to human interpretation.

Evidently, with so many complications arising from the study of the scripts and the course of history, one might think that this belief, cultivated for thousands of years in a god whose 'idea' has been carefully constructed by the human imagination for a human brain to be able to grapple some of its meaning, is deeply problematic. All this discussion on god was always riddled with contradictions, disagreements, ambivalent meanings and inexplicable mysteries. Perhaps one ought to drop the whole thing as it appears to be so abstract and complex, and turn to alternatives.



Maybe, we should attribute our existence and the interpretation of our realm to the cosmic energy and the universe; perhaps nature itself should provide adequate explanation of how things were or are as everything is part of it (Moore, 2013).

It was reasonable from older generations to rely on the spiritual world for explanations on the mysteries of life, guidance in the face of adversity and fulfillment in the context of service or purpose. Religion was a guiding light and a beacon of hope for people around the world. The matter of faith and the element of the divine are so deeply instilled in almost every culture of the human race. Their effects were evident throughout history in the formation of society, political life, direction of economic development and education, creation and obedience of laws; they affected the course of history by wars waged on their name. The most crucial effect was on the formation of the basis and development of our moral behavior.

## Nietzsche

### The end of God

“Gott ist tot”. Almost 140 years ago Nietzsche proclaims in his book ‘The Gay Science’ the definitive moment in history that “God is dead”. After the ‘Enlightenment’ period, science bloomed. The new discoveries and the scientific progress at the time proved that our universe was governed by physical laws and not by a divine power. An event that shook the world to its core. Suddenly the traditional claim of divine right to be legitimate for governments, crumbled and was replaced by the consent of the governed. The morality deriving from the divine validation that shaped and regulated the existing laws was at stake. Automatically, that meant there can be something else other than god we can refer to as the origin of our moral nature and can possibly validate our moral sense.

Once Nietzsche realized that god’s existence was not necessary anymore to mankind he realized instantly what danger that fact entails. As he described in his ‘Twilight of Idols’, without the divine lawgiver the basic belief system that the whole western world evolved along with, was up in the air, revealing a tremendous moral gap that had to be filled. The philosopher although being an atheist most of his adult life, he struggled to rid himself of the religious influences he experienced as a child, which could be the same case for his fellow men, atheists or not. He empathized with the human race, realizing it would go into a deep existential crisis in the absence of the divine element (Luft, 2020).

What has been argued from many philosophers who studied Nietzsche was that by his famous phrase of 'God is dead' he did not mean a literal death of god, but rather the idea we have for god; our thinking of god. And given the history of mankind so far, the tremendous spiritual efforts people had gone through, the wars they waged on each other for this one god, this apocalyptic moment that made god redundant, would lead to disorientation and despair. If god is hope and he no longer exists, where should we rest our hopes on? If there is no salvation, why go on at all? Why be good? These are just some of the burning questions Nietzsche put forward and fiercely argued by other philosophers following his time.

### The aftermath

Nietzsche realizing the void being created he attempted to provide an alternative. He argued the concept of a higher man, a creature that evolves into such extent that is void of necessities that include supernatural explanations and is relying in reason and science to construct further society and himself. This ideal of a man, an *Übermensch*, the archetype of a man that makes a choice and he is aware of the responsibility of his selection. Nietzsche believed that this should be the aim and desire of men in order to evolve further into something magnificent; a creature that wilds his own will, fully aware of his potential and being self-accountable for his own actions. History ironically would provide the platform for attempts of this concept to be applied; distorted and manipulated, in the hands of selected few, that created a dystopian reality which engulfed the world into wars (Luft, 2020, pp. 263-276).

The shocking realization that not only there was no such thing as god or any spiritual immateriality, but also that the physical world is all there is, creates an emotional void that spirituality filled. There is also the argument that humans are not special or a 'creation' blessed with special abilities and feelings as the creator intended, but mere biological products subject to favorable happenstance. We are no more made in the image and likeness of god, but rather animals that by accident evolved more than the rest of the planet's species; which prompts the question 'why just us?'. Going back to the reduction of humans from god's creations to mere biological products, there is a strong rationalization that if god was the highest good, the *summum bonum*, and we had a sense of intrinsic moral value deriving from our connection with him, then this sense is void and any effort to redemption or self-reflection is meaningless.

### Apologetics and Atheists

One of the most natural questions that arises in philosophy very often is whether ethics depends

on religion in any essential way. There is a connection that is undeniable in terms of ethical norms that form a large part of religious teachings which for their part correspond closely to the norms of secular ethical theories. If God created the world and everything in it then he also created the good. If it was not for this creator, then there would not be any such thing as goodness show ethics being mainly concerned with the science of good would depend directly on God. If ethics depend on God and religion as a theory or a system coming from God, then it would follow that ethics depends on religion. We can follow this syllogism only in the prospect of the initial hypothesis being true, that God exists and is the creator of all. The moral argument for the existence of god relied in a common ground all moral theories share. In the existence of an objective moral order. In this realm there is moral good and evil (values). There is also moral right and wrong (obligations). Plato named god, the 'highest good' and source of all goodness. If there is such thing as objective moral values and god exists, he is the source of their existence.

### A debate

There is a famous debate between a naturalist and an apologetic on the argument of the origin of morality and subsequently of god's existence and role. Shelley Keagan is a professor of philosophy at Yale University, his writings are about moral philosophy and normative ethics. William Lane Craig is an American analytic philosopher and Christian theologian, historian, apologist, and author. He is Professor of Philosophy at Houston Baptist University and Research Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology (Reasonable Faith, n.d.).

In the debate of Shelley Keagan and William Lane Craig there are some excellent points made for and against the claim that God is necessary for morality to exist. Initially we have to define morality. A summed presentation of these points will be laid here, arguing why God is necessary for morality. If by morality we mean a pattern of social behavior, then this behavior can take place even if we prove that god does not exist. God is not necessary for human beings to exert certain social behaviors which they call 'acting morally'. But if by morality you mean certain things are really good or evil, that certain actions are impermissible or unconditionally obligatory, then we should agree that the presence of god is indeed necessary and vital. Otherwise morality is a human convention or illusion in the absence of god. Certain patterns of behavior can go on, but it would be an erroneous to think that they have objective moral significance. Traditional abject moral values have been based in god, who is the highest good. He is the locus and paradigm of

moral value. He is the holly nature that supplies the absolute standard against all actions are measured (Lane Craig William, 2012).

Shelley supports as a naturalist supports that in the naturalistic point of view, moral values are the by-product of biological evolution and social conditioning. Have we conditioned our social behaviors in a way that is cooperative because natural selection has determined it to be advantageous in the struggle for survival? So, do we have moral awareness because it has biological worth? Is morality just an aid to reproduction and cohabitation? Here lay the implications between materialism/naturalism vs determinism.

Craig is explaining why defining morality from a naturalistic point of view does not provide objective moral values. Naturalists are typically materialists or physicalists, who regard man as a purely animal organism. But, if there is no mind distinct from the brain, then everything we think or do is determined by the input of our five senses and our genetic makeup. There is no 'personal agent' who freely decides to do something. Without freedom, none of our choices is morally significant. So, our decisions and choices are controlled by sensory input and physical constitution. If god does not exist, then there is no basis for moral accountability. God holds all the persons accountable at the end of their lives for their actions. Despite the inequities of this life in the end the scales of god's justice will be balanced, and thus the moral choices we make in this life are significant.

The finality of death is a tremendous point of reference whether we should be good or bad. "Given the finality of death it really doesn't matter how you live. There is no objective reason why man should be moral unless morality pays off in his social life or makes him feel good." Historian Stuart C. Easton. So, if you are powerful you can easily ignore the moral dictations and live in an indulgent life. (Kagan & Lane Craig, 2012). If we accept that god does not exist and we are not morally accountable to him, it would be deeply demoralizing. Because then we have to accept that our moral choices are ultimately insignificant. There is a deterioration of moral obligation and thus we fall in indifference or despair. And, at the end of the day it doesn't matter what you choose to do (Lane Craig William, 2012).

Charles Darwin in his own research on the origins of man and his morality, he provides an example " In the same manner as various animals have some sense of beauty, though they admire widely-different objects, so they might have a sense of right and wrong, though led by it

to follow widely different lines of conduct. If, for instance, to take an extreme case, men were reared under precisely the same conditions as hive-bees, there can hardly be a doubt that our unmarried females would, like the worker-bees, think it a sacred duty to kill their brothers, and mothers would strive to kill their fertile daughters; and no one would think of interfering.” (Darwin C. , 1909).

The argument that ethical reflection is reduced to mere observation, in the absence of god, is an unknown premise for us to exist inside. Our humanity is based on our capacity for sympathy and its extension to (self-)reflection. Since the beginning of our social existence we heavily relied on the unseen divine powers that surrounded our life, providing fear and awe of our world and setting boundaries to the behaviors between us. Maybe it is unthinkable for us to imagine a world without reference to anything sacred or religious because this world had never existed until now. Maybe in the distant future there will be a time where this could be a reality that can be researched and these new generations would have successfully managed to get rid of all traces of religious culturalism that had influenced our thinking so far.

## The Order of Kant

### Deontology

This strain of theories, coming from the Greek word 'δέον', deon, "obligation, duty", claims that morality is matter of duty and intent. We act according to a set of rules out of obligation and willing duty to comply with them. Whether something is right or wrong is not dependant to its consequences as an act. Actions are right and wrong in themselves.

Kant is the most prominent representative of Deontological Ethics. He thought it was possible to develop a sufficiently consistent moral system by appealing to reason. He believed that ethical actions follow a set of universal moral rules that are already known to all rational beings, such as do not kill, lie, cheat etc. and as we are rational agents, we will follow them automatically. He distinguished that the 'summum bonum', the highest good/virtue was a 'good will'. He formulated categorical and hypothetical imperatives in order for the will to attain its 'good' context.

Kant's theory was undisputedly a critical point in the course of moral thought. He set new standards in the way the most important philosophical issues were perceived, and he paved new paths towards further research and development existing moral theories. As a free thinker he approached critical issues that were and still are under discussion for man's conscious thought, his freedom and his moral origins. His innovative theory expanded the philosophical realm in new directions and was set as a further development to the theories that influenced his revolutionary thought, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and Christianity. Kant's ethics is to be found in his following works: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), *the Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1787), *the Metaphysical Elements of Justice and The Doctrine of Virtue*, *Religion within the limits of Reason alone* (1793) and finally in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). The Kantian Ethics received multiple criticisms over the course of history for their exact meaning, problematic content, practical social application and rigid character; but in overall, they shaped and affected many of the forthcoming philosophical movements and tendencies after his time. Here is an indicative reference: *Phenomenology of value ethics* (M. Scheler, P. Ricoeur, E. Levinas), *existential ethics* (M. Heidegger, J.-P. Sartre, A. Camus), *contemporary British moral and political theory* (J. Rawls, R. M. Hare, R. Nozick).

Kant grounds morality in reason. He argues a theory that its starting hypothesis is that we all have knowledge of what is moral; we all know what we must do and what we mustn't. But, how can we trust all men that will always exercise their reason? What is the one element that will bind them to that duty. What happens when emotions overpower reason? Kant's theory is trying to answer these questions.

### The highest Good

At the beginning of every theoretical attempt to analyze a theory or argue a position for or against it, there must be a set of 'right questions' that must be asked. Kant warns his readers early in his work that it is prudent we know how to form the right question in order to be led to the right conclusions. So, which are the fundamental issues in Kantian Ethics? Kant's theory is set apart from the beginning as it differentiates from all other theories in terms of the angle it approached the subject of morality. He believes that the primary point and source of morality is not the quest for happiness but morality itself, in terms of fulfilling our duty or seek the virtue of being moral in itself. He is in search of the primary principle of morality that is its source and sole regulator. He wants to deliver the definition and the standard of morality. Therefore, once he distinguishes the first question, which is what the primary principle of morality is; he moves on to the separation of the issue of the highest good and the ethical value of an act. And finally, he concentrates to the ultimum cause of actions and the purpose of living. For Kant, the highest/greatest good, the "summum bonum" as Cicero named it, it is an end in itself and at the same time containing all other goods. The supreme principle of morality in Kant's theory is the categorical imperative. For him, the highest good is compiled from two elements, the moral good (virtue) and the natural good (eudaimonia).

### Pre-Deontology

Unlike his predecessors Kant deviated from the path of considering the highest good as the pursue of happiness, or as Aristotle named it "eudaimonia". The critical distinctions that set him apart is his remarkable drive to locate purpose and origin in morality elsewhere that what had already been accepted by his contemporaries. For him the primary concern of morality is the quest of the greatest good and the ultimate purpose of actions themselves, in order to attain a good life. Up until Kant's time, all the previous primary moral philosophical concerns were deriving from either pleasure (hedoni), happiness (eudaimonia) or the absolute purpose/end (telos).

All moral theories have common grounds, eudaimonia-the pursuit of happiness is one of them. Most philosophers identify eudaimonia with the good living and the good conduct in life. Kant thinks further and re-identifies the term. The central question, around which the Kantian ethics revolve, is the 'what ought I do?'. Kant attempts to identify the fundamental principles of action that we ought to follow. The theory he develops is not an answer to any account of virtuous living, in the Aristotelian sense, nor a perfectly sound structured thesis as Plato argued. It is also not a claim about a moral reality that exceeds human experience in a divine realm. He renounces both frameworks of theology and realism that formed the until then philosophical thought and grounded morality in the divine or the necessity of our reality and development (Durant, 1953).

After the careful evaluation of the religious dogmas and the social demands, Kant concluded that the primary concern of morality should not be to obtain the highest form of happiness, truth or completeness, but the exploration and identification of the highest authority of morality that regulates all else. The purpose of man is determined by this definition. He argues against most of the pre-existing metaphysical theories and in particular against their substantiations of God's existence. He strongly disagrees with the view that our thinking should be reliable to a natural or supernatural standpoint. He reckons that our thought can only derive from a human standpoint and any claims for a transcendent realm that we have no natural access to should be dismissed. The reality we base our way of thinking must be of sensory nature, hence experienceable by humans. According to Kant, our mental faculties are built in such a way that we are aware of things prior experience, a priori, we can refer to particular experiences without knowing aspects of that particular realm.

### Nature and Ideas

Kant considers the true subject of morality is the worthiness of being happy. He separates the moral realm in two levels, two perspectives from where we gaze all reality: nature and freedom, or from another point, the aesthetic world "mundus sensibilis" what is appeared or revealed and the cognitive world "mundus intelligibilis", what we can understand or consider. This is a close depiction to Plato's natural world and the world of ideas. Nature is the sum of phenomena that are regulated from the natural laws, it is the total of our empirical and sensual reality. Although it may seem that it affects our external existence only it is influencing our inner essence that is dependent to our external senses. For Kant, natural laws have the utmost importance in our any attempt to understand our existence. He insists that this causal order and our claims to knowledge



confined to the natural world. Nonetheless, he continues there is no reason for men to believe that there is nothing further than the realm known to them via their senses (Durant, 1953).

This absolute natural order deriving from these laws grants to all beings, events and actions taking place in this realm, the mechanism of causality; all things and beings are subject to the law of cause and effect. Man, as a natural living being, is part of Nature and subject to it as he is to his own naturality. Kant saw morality under the light of human reason. He desired to free it from the divine validation and from the consequential-effect it had on men. Practical reason itself becomes the criteria for right and wrong, stimulating moral action. Practical reason enables the human being to grasp, what is already known to him, the innate moral law. The moral law is deontological in the sense that moral action has little to do with the consequences. For Kant, his categorical imperative is grounded solely in the notion of duty. There is one domain of value, the domain of moral value which is immune to human fragility and vulnerability. This is the source of our moral ability and we should guarantee it from all other urges or concepts but trust it as a natural instinct (Kant, God and Immortality as postulates of Pure Reason, 2013).

### Free Will

If man was totally and absolutely subject to natural necessity and order, then any principles and values, even deontological or other moral judgments, would have no meaning. For presupposition of moral responsibility and relevant charges of principle, requires that the doer of an act must have the ability in the respective amount of time and execute proper function to consider more than one course of actions prior or during an act or decision. So, for these values or principles of morality to be credible, a man's inherent freedom and independence from natural necessity is required. Our moral directives make sense only on the assumption that we have free will. Kant argues that free will and causality are compatible, provided that the ability to act autonomously is not perceived as a particular in the order of the natural world that is independent (Durant, 1953).

Kant divides philosophy to its categories, following the Stoic division of Science, into three branches; Logos is the dominant domain in human existence. Kant tries to construct the moral principles by using rational procedures. Although he begins by identifying a good will as the highest good, he does not accept that the principles of good willing can be fixed by reference to an objective good or telos/end at which they aim. Rather than assuming an identified account of what 'good' must be and using it to determine what men 'ought to do', he is trying to utilize a

consideration of a set of moral directives that will determine what is to have 'a good will'. He proceeds to construct three formulations of sets of principles that will lead to an ethical system that will serve all.

His reasoning goes as follows: What set of rules could the majority agree upon, without any reference to specific traits or affiliations. The majority must be rational agents that are not subject to any external influence of any sort. If the rule proposed does not serve the majority in total, then it should be rejected. This idea is put forward as a demand, for the majority. And thus, we are led to the formulation of Kant's Moral Law or as known in its technical term, the Categorical Imperative.

### The absolute Law

The supreme principle of morality is reason. Pure reason is the agent that wills our choice of duty. On Kant's accord, morality is about good will/motives, not consequences. We can control our motives but not the consequences. Deep inside each one of us there is a center of commands; there our moral compass lies. Some are categorical, others hypothetical. The agent who is doing the choosing for our actions to be deemed as moral or not is pure reason. Pure reason that does the willing is not subject to external inclinations and is commonly shared by all rational beings. Doing the right thing comes naturally if we follow our reason. If we choose freely how to act and why; it is guaranteed, we will follow through in accordance with a universal moral law. And that is because the reason that governs our will is the same for all rational beings. This is how the categorical imperative received its universal character.

### Motive – Intention -The Quality of the Will

The motive must be of a certain kind. A person needs to do the right thing for the right reason. The motive confers the moral worth into an action. The only true and pure motive that can do that is duty. What matters is the quality of the will. The incentive for acting as such is the sanctimony of the Moral Law. The Philosopher firmly believed that reason can determine a man's will. Kant distinguishes between the heteronomous determination of the Will, where we are instruments not ends to the purposes we pursue, and the autonomous determination of the will, when we act accordingly to a law, we have given to ourselves. We do something for its own sake as an end. That way we cease to be instruments and we become as ends in ourselves (Kant, The good will and its results, 1940).

### What makes freedom possible?

There are two points of reference in the spectrum of life, the rational essence and the natural presence. As an object of experience, I belong to the sensible world as a sentient being. In this realm my actions are determined by the natural laws and by the regularities of cause and effect. But, as a subject of experience, I inhabit an intelligible world. Here, being independent of the laws of Nature, I am capable of a state of autonomy, having the ability to act according to a law I give myself. Kant claims that only from the second standpoint can I regard myself as free. For having independence from determined actions in the sensible world is to have freedom.

If I were a holy empirical being, as Utilitarians suggest, meaning I would be subject only to the deliverances of my senses and driven by my natural urges, I would be incapable of being free. Because then every exercise of the will would be conditioned by the desire of some object or urge. In that case all acts would be heteronomous. The idea of freedom makes agents members of a tangible and intelligible world. Hence the categorical imperatives are possible. If we only inhabited the world of ideas then all our actions would be in accord with the autonomy of the will and we would not be drawn away by physical needs, urges, or misled information from our senses. Exactly because we inhabit at the same time both the realms of freedom and necessity there is always a void between what we do and what we ought to do (Durant, 1953).

The idea that we are rational beings, denotes our ability for reason and vice versa. The idea that we are autonomous agents, makes us free. We have capacity for both reason and freedom in our faculties. Pain and pleasure are not my sovereign masters as I am more advanced than a mere sentient state of mind. When we seek after pleasure and avoid pain, as beasts do, we are not acting freely. We are subject to these urges and needs. Our natural necessity or instincts do not lead to freedom. We cannot escape those instincts as they are imprinted in our system and define our nature, nonetheless we are only following a prompting that was embedded in our nature. We did not choose it or created it. It is an indispensable mechanism producing directives to be followed automatically by us in order to keep us alive and sustained and maintain lucid/healthy emotional states. Kant insists that our will should not be governed by our instincts or emotions.

To act freely is to act autonomously. To act autonomously means to follow a law that I give myself and no one else. This capacity to act freely generates dignity for human life; being ends ourselves

and not merely means to an end or use others as means. Heteronomy is acting according to an inclination or desire that I haven't chosen myself; it denotes a predisposition or a law of nature. Conclusively, to act freely is not to choose the best means to an end. To act freely is to choose the end for its own sake. This capacity to act freely is what gives human life its special dignity. Respecting human dignity means regarding persons not just as means but as ends in themselves (Sandel, Harvard Justice Series, 2009).

As discussed above, acting out of duty is following a moral law that you impose on yourself. That's what makes duty compatible with freedom. Morality is not empirical. Whatever you see in the world, whatever you discover through science, cannot decide or answer moral questions. Morality stands at a certain distance from the empirical world and that's why no science can deliver moral truth.

Let's see the interplay of reason and emotion in moral decision making. When we act morally certain forms of value come into being only when people act in the light of moral concerns. Moral behavior as we speak of it refers only to moral action performed for reasons that are morally estimable or measurable. There are various and complex accounts on what constitutes moral worth. We tend to focus on the sort of moral worth that may emerge only in morally challenging circumstances. When people overcome temptations take great personal risks and make significant sacrifices all for the sake of morality, we consider this to be *prima facie*, strong grounds for attributing moral worth to them. Morality is the crown of humanity.

### The formulation of categorical Imperatives

Kant's hypothesis goes as follows. Take an action (rule/maxim) and apply it as a universal law; not only one person or some doing it but everyone. If it leads to a logical contradiction it fails, the test and is not morally permissible. His thinking is that we always universalize subconsciously whenever an act is taking place. This is instinctive as it flows from our rational nature. For example, I lied today to my teachers and my parents to skip school and go out and play. What if everyone lied all the time? There would be no trust, no truth, no reliability. The logical contradiction here is: I lie to my parents because they believe I tell the truth. I want them to believe my lie. If I universalize it this scene would have never happened as they would have never believed me since there would be a thing such as trust. So, here lies the conflict with reason in our test and hence the test of lying, fails (Sandel, Harvard Justice Series, 2009).

## The second formulation of Imperatives

Kant argues that people have intrinsic value. It matters little if they are liked, loved or respected by others. We treat them with respect because we do not see them merely as means or tools. Example: I wish to have my grooming done once every month. I should find a barber and lock him in my basement so that he serves his purpose, fulfilling my grooming needs. Rational creatures deserve respect because they are self-regulating units. They have free will. They choose freely to obey or disobey the categorical imperatives.

## Hypothetical Imperatives

These commands are based on what I want (desire) and the means to get it (process). Example: if you want to become a singer you have to practice, sing, learn a musical instrument perhaps and try to participate in festivals and concerts.

## Categorical Imperatives

The categorical character of this command stems out of an inner intuitive obligation, so immediate and absolute, that is undisputable and shared by all rational creatures. It is not based on what we want; not conditioned by desire or feelings. It refers to people as persons, not means or tools. We choose freely to act as such, without reference or dependence to any further inclination.

Example: imagine a scenario where SS Officers knock on an exemplary German citizen and ask him to point out where Jews live. The German citizen is aware of what will follow if he reveals such information. If lying is a bad thing, according to Kant's categorical imperative, then he should tell the truth. If in this occasion lying will not be a bad thing, then why is it permissible. There is a moral difference between a moral lie and a misleading truth. Kant doesn't base morality on consequences. He bases it on the categorical nature of moral truth (Durant, 1953).

What is the motive and the consequence here; the motive is saving lives. According to Kant's universal law, if we maximize then in order to save lives we should always lie. Here lies something morally at stake within the maximizing theorem. There are many factors at play whom the absolutistic character of universalizing does not serve equally. The German citizen has many things at stake to consider; his life, his family's life, the lives of the Jews. So, 'save lives should supersede the 'do not lie'. Kant demonstrated his theorem with the example of 'the burglar at the

door'. The motive and the end/consequences here, justify the means. What should prevail is the reasonable thinking of choosing to lie in order to save lives. If fear (self-interest) was the decisive agent, then by telling the truth would lead to loss of life which is graver than lying and a far worse.

### The Shopkeeper examples

In his theory he presents the example with three shopkeepers in order to demonstrate motives and their interplay with morality, consequences and the value of each act. The intrinsic value of things as an end is demonstrated in the analysis of these examples. There are three scenarios where three shopkeepers pass the chance to shortchange their customers. Which of the three shopkeepers is acting according to Kant's moral code? The first shopkeeper gives fair prices and treats his customers well because it is good for business (prudence). The second one, doesn't cheat them because he really cares for his customers, actually loves them and wants to give them quality product. The third one, because she feels it's his duty and the right thing to do. According to Kant, shopkeeper no. three is the moral one, because her actions are not defined by self-interest/prudence or feelings/empathy but from duty/obligation. All three examples are in accord with duty and the result is the same, the customers are well-treated, but the motives are different; and that is a world of difference for Kant.

### Kant's morality

Morality is interconnected with free will which defines our intent/motive. What matters most is from which intention the result was produced. The first shopkeeper's intent is based on a wise choice for his business indicating motive out of self-interest. So, the customers although offered a good service/product, are being wronged in a way (Prudence). The second example is based in feelings which are unreliable and subject to our desires and self-interest (Empathy). The third shopkeeper's motive is based on duty; a notion closely linked with the concept of obligation. This notion expresses moral action as a requirement (Obligation).

Kant believes in a moral word of duty and requirements. He believes that morality is not best served in cases where no matter the motive, the outcome is positive. For him the intentions of a person are his moral signature. The moral worth of an act is designated from the actor of his will. This is a perfect example also for the Utilitarian approach, in all three instances there is 'good' generated for all parties. No matter the motive the outcome is the same; the customers get excellent service. In a utilitarian world our ethical third shopkeeper could end up being immoral

as he wouldn't produce the most possible good for, he would refrain from adopting the motive of self-interest.

### Freedom, necessity and free will

Kant's concept of freedom was revolutionary and at the same time as simple as a natural prescript itself. To act freely is to act autonomously. When autonomous actions take place then we act according to a law we give ourselves. (We ourselves become our moral Authority). Reason makes men something more than physical creatures with appetites. When men, like animals, seek after fulfillment of pleasure, avoidance of pain or sexual satisfaction, we are not really acting freely. We are acting subject to these appetites and impulses. For example, we do not choose thirst or hunger, sexual attraction or other selected appetites and when we strive to satisfy them we act out of natural necessity; meaning it is not optional for us not to fulfill those needs, we must. So, for Kant, freedom is the opposite of such mechanisms of necessity. We are obeying an order that we ourselves haven't created.

How can a man's will be decided and his way of behaving if not by the prompts of nature? To act freely and according to a law I give myself is to act with autonomy. To act according to directives from desires I haven't chosen myself, subject to my nature is to act with heteronomy. Nature's main element is causality, the cause and effect phenomenon. Inside its system everything serves a purpose prescribed to fulfill it without deviation, by choosing the best means to an end. To act freely is not to do just that; not choosing the best means to a given end but choosing the end itself for its own sake. When we are instruments and not authors to the ends we pursue, we have heteronomous determination of the will. When we act upon a law, we have entitled to ourselves we stop being instruments and we do something for its own sake, as an end in itself; we become as ends in ourselves and we have autonomous determination of the will. The capacity to act freely is what grants human life its special dignity, what elevates man above other living beings; the choice. Respecting human dignity means regarding other persons not just as means but as ends themselves. It is wrong to use people for the sake of other people or collective happiness (Sandel, 2009).

### The moral worth of an act

Can we measure morality? How much does an act worth morally? Where do we place the value

to determine the worth of an act? Kant tried to answer all these questions by establishing that the value of an act, and hence its worth acknowledgment, lies on the motive that drives the act itself. What makes an act morally worthy consists not in the consequences or in the results that derive from it. It has to do with the motive, the quality of the will; with the intention for which the act is done. What is of most importance is the motive, and it must be of a certain kind. “A good will isn’t good because of what effects or accomplishes, it’s good in itself. Even if by utmost effort the good will accomplishes nothing it would still shine like a jewel for its own sake as something that has its full value in itself” (Kant, 1940). The idea is that the motive confers that value on a moral action. The only kind of motive that can minister moral worth on an action is the motive of duty. That is the opposite of doing something out of a sense of duty (Durant, 1953).

Without freedom none of our acts is morally significant, Kant claims. For him freedom is a constant, almost in a mathematical sense. Morality relates to free will as a natural derivation; without us being free agents to make the choice that will deem an act moral, there is no worth in the act itself. He grounds morality in reason and argues a theory that its starting hypothesis is that we all have knowledge of what is moral; we all know what we must do, and we mustn’t. He compiles a set of three contrasts that map his theory (Sandel, Harvard Channel: Justice Lectures, 2009).

<b>Morality</b>		
Motives	Duty	Inclination
<b>Freedom</b>		
Determination of the Will	Autonomous	Heteronomous
<b>Reason</b>		
Imperatives	Categorical	Hypothetical

T.1. Kant’s three contrasts (Sandel, Harvard Justice Series, 2009)

### The imperatives and their inducement

Acting from duty, is acting out of free will, with reason. Not only I do it because I must, but I also want to do it. I am happy to do it because although it may be opposed to my self-interest, I will be content with my decision as my act is sanctioned by a ‘higher authority’ that I trust and love. That authority is to be defined. And lastly it will grant me a ‘clear conscience’, which all humans strive



for. As the French say, the softest pillow is a clean conscience. Duty is a cluster of normative concepts that entails requirements and obligations. It is not necessarily in agreement with our feelings and sometimes not even with existing laws. The notion of obligation and the idea of duty is largely absent from ancient thought. It was first introduced from religion, and more accurately Christianity; where the will of God defined morally right and wrong. Doing the right thing is not always in accordance with our self-interest, but it is aligned with our conscience. Because knowing the right thing is embedded there, and we are always aware of it regardless if we choose to do it or not. Free will here is directing our intent, our motive. It matters immensely out of which intention the result came to be (Sandel, Harvard Justice Series, 2009).

### Implications of categorical Nature

Unfortunately for Kant's theory, like Socrates before him, not all men are perfectly reasonable human beings and most of the time they don't see eye-to-eye. Socrates 'Apologia' is the perfect example of how having faith solely in reason, and that men will come to their senses after calming down their passion and see the truth, the right thing to do, doesn't always lead to good. Socrates ended up forced to drink hemlock and die, condemned from his fellow Athenians for youth corruption caused by his teachings and from his dangerous ideas. His primary belief was that no one is born evil and man has the capacity to self-control his passions to a degree that his discipline will eliminate their strength. Kant following on his steps, declared a moral law so universal, an imperative that all men must follow at all costs. The main problem with Kant's theory is that is morally extremely demanding.

Humans are rational beings but are also governed by their emotions. But Kant believed that reason can produce action on its own without the help of contingent desires. They can be isolated, and our rational faculty can take control of our actions. It should be noted here that David Hume in his work concerning the principles of morals, will claim that the faculty of reason is exclusively concerned with the determination of truth and falsity, not decision making (Hume, An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, 1751). I will expand on that claim further down. Kant's theoretical reasoning, apart from its demanding nature, was impractical to be exercised in a diverse society that its citizens are in different sociopolitical levels. As it touches absolutism with its categorical nature, it could easily lead to extremities and further moral implications. Although understanding his need for a solid, steadfast point of reference that would keep morality grounded

to an unchangeable element; an authority that would dictate the right thing to do irrelevantly of time, society, or nature, he failed to understand human nature anthropologically.

### The postulate of Pure Practical Reason

Kant realized that the Supreme condition of the highest goods in this world is Holiness, a state in which the moral law is in perfect accordance with the will. A perfection of which no rational being is able to reach at any point being part of the natural world. We can attain perfect accordance with the moral law as it is a principle of the moral destination of our nature. He realizes that for a finite being like men are the only possible thing is an endless progress from the lower to higher degrees of moral perfection. The infinite being 'sees' things differently and in ways we can never ascertain in the infinity of time. Kant Argues here that ethical thinking presupposes the existence of God and immortality. Although in his critique of pure reason he included strong criticism of the traditional religious arguments for god's existence, he believed that the existence of an infinite being is critical for morality to be maintained.

Morality invites us to be morally flawless; but since the moral requirement entails the possibility of fulfilling it, and since we are also incapable of moral perfection here on earth the demand that we be morally flawless leads to immortality for an afterlife, is the only context that we might actually succeed in reaching such a state of ethical perfection. Kant also considers God a necessary postulate of morality because morality requires that justice be done. Justice requires obedience in order to reward the virtues and the wicked to receive punishment. As Kant acknowledges, justice is not always served down on earth. For men are vile and imperfect beings. Therefore, a beyond with the potential for them to receive their desserts is required. This distribution of rewards and punishments will not come of an earthly or an unknown source but from an authority with enough wisdom and power to allocate this benefits or burdens equally justly and unchangeably. That authority is only God. Of course, the philosopher realizes in the process that this does not provide proof of God. But it does provide ground for the presupposition that morality does indeed require the existence of God and immortality (Durant, 1953).

"In order to make these characteristics of this conceptions clear, we can add the remark here that whilst we ascribe to God various attributes ,the quality of which we also find applicable to creatures ,only that in him they are raised to the highest degree, e.g. power ,knowledge ,goodness ,presence etc. Under the designations of omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence there are

three that are ascribed to God exclusively and yet without the addition of greatness and which are all moral. He is the only holy, the only blessed, the only wise, because these conceptions already imply the absence of limitation, in the order of these attributes. He's also the only holy lawgiver and creator, the good governor and preserver and the just Judge; three attributes which include everything by which God is the object of religion and in conformity with which the metaphysical perfections are added of themselves in the reason" (Kant, God and Immortality as postulates of Pure Reason, 2013).

Kant recognizes the importance of a higher authority that will not be regulated by anything human or known. He entrusts in spirituality to re-enforce his theory as a motivation for men to ascertain moral conduct. He realizes that duty is not enough, and all human feeling fade up to a point. God is the criterion of moral goodness and make certain character traits and qualities good by being himself the example of goodness. He makes certain actions right by commanding us not to do them or alternatively that the criterion of moral rightness is what God would command or desirous to do. God's existence is necessary for moral utterances to make proper sense. What is stressed out here is the importance of this necessity in terms of an active moral agent.

### The role of Reason

Reason is a tool for morality, not its source. It can stir our moral compass, help us make sense of why we should want to act in a way, practice the act and reflect on it. Undoubtedly, it does all the work. Alas though, our moral status does not originate there. What men consider rational changes are subject to time, culture and society. There was a time not very long ago that smoking was not just fashionable or a social activity but literally what the doctor prescribed. There were advertisements and billboards urging everyone to 'light one up' often accompanied with sexist and defamatory direct or indirect mentions to women. Of course, someone might object to the obvious, that we didn't know medically its effects on human health yet. But doesn't that apply to further examples? Our knowledge of things is still so limited. "The fact is that morality can demand immense sacrifices, and it is hard to see how such sacrifices could be justified by anything short of certainty" (Tenenbaum, 2011).

## David Hume

“Reason of itself is inactive and perfectly inert. Reason is an ought only to be the slave of the passions. And can never claim to have any other role than to serve and obey them” (Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 1751). Hume was a Scottish philosopher with a bold and innovative thinking. His work influenced the nineteenth century philosophical currents. In his book *Philosophy of Religion*, he criticized blind religious belief and argued that is unreasonable to base one’s faith in statements of hypothetical miracles or suppositions that are not scientifically substantiated. Against the predominant concept of his time that the world is made by design, a divine design, and that morality stems from our inner nature that we received as built to God’s image (Thomas Aquinas), he suggested that we must reject these ideas and beliefs. He severely criticized religions and advanced theories on their origins arguing that they are based mainly to human psychology instead of a divine force. His main goal was to separate religion from morality. He constructed and offered one of the most secular moral theories on the origins of our moral instincts by grounding them in our emotions instead of divine powers or rational arguments.

He is the first one to introduce the term ‘utility’. He inaugurated the doctrines of Liberty and Necessity and their entanglement. His theory follows the following philosophical trail: Human motives, character traits, circumstances of action, human behavior, consequences. From this initial attempt we can see the embryonic form of the later Utilitarian theory of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. For Hume, all actions of a moral agent are motivated by character traits, specifically either virtuous or vicious character traits.

### Original and constructed virtues

Hume believes that some virtues are natural to man and some others are the product of convention. For example, if you are cooking and serving food at a shelter for the homeless and sick. You are giving food to a starving person, whom is incapable of provide that to themselves. The receivers will experience a good feeling from the agent’s act. They will understand the usefulness of your act and results will be shortly evident, as this feeding will improve their health. Furthermore, a group of spectators who are witnessing the scene, would realize the benefits and agreeable feelings generated from your acts. Better and agreeable feelings are generated to the group of spectators observing the act itself, the act of charity performed. They will also experience good feelings about the agent, in terms of his intentions and actions as a character. These

sympathetic feelings of pleasure signify the group's moral approval of the agent's authentic act of charity. Finally, the agent him/herself whilst and after performing this donation will be flooded by good emotions of fulfillment (Korsgaard, 1999).

There are three stand points that generate the same product of emotion towards different factors, but all connected and involved in the same act. Pleasure is the operative word and the motivating trait of character that generates it is to be a virtue. By following the same process, we can reverse the intent of the act from making someone better by giving food you are acting in such way as to make them sick. The act of the agent trying to hurt the receiver would generate the feeling of pain in two of the three stand points- we are not aware if the agent experiences pleasure or pain only or mixed feelings- and thereby declare the motivating trait a vice.

The difficulty is to determine whether a motivational trait is original or artificial. By original is meant an authentic prompt by nature. Because of the subtle handling this process requires, Hume is deciding the virtues one at a time. He is creating a primary group of them like charity, generosity, benevolence and forbearance. Then he proceeds to group the artificial virtues: promise-keeping, justice, chastity and fidelity. What is impressive in his work is that he states in order to have a well-functioning state of providence and good governing we essentially need the artificial virtues. He then proceeds to deem any other virtue generated by those and the superfluous virtues as natural. He also expands his theory of the standpoints of agent-receiver-spectator from the act taking place to real-time into instances where it is imagined, read or heard instead of witnessed. Pleasure can still be generated and conveyed to listeners, or participants in general with any other form of means.

Lastly, Hume is offering further clarifications on the agent-receiver-viewer schematic by presenting combinations of feelings produced by the same acts. The receiver is producing pleasure to the agent for giving him the opportunity to manifest his virtuous intent and the viewers are receiving pleasure from the giver's act, from the receiver's reaction to this act and from themselves that they have the privilege to witness. So, as far as we can see there are more than one sources producing pleasure and situations where a single person is performing more than one role. These combinations led Hume to conclude that there are four irreducible categories of qualities that constitute moral virtue: qualities useful to others, which include benevolence, forbearance charity, justice, fidelity and veracity; qualities useful to oneself, which include pertinence, perseverance, and patience; qualities immediately agreeable to others, which include

wit, eloquence and sharpness; and qualities immediately agreeable to oneself, which include good humor, self-esteem and pride (Korsgaard, 1999).

Let's take the following example-claim; it is wrong to harm and innocent child. It is often said that a proposition that does not require further inferential justification, such as our example, is the content of an intuition. In his moral theory in book three of 'An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals' (1751), Hume opens the discussion for his theory by stating what moral approval is not; and that is, a judgment based in reason about conceptual relations and empirical facts. Then he proceeds building his moral theory around the idea of a spectator who approves or disapproves of people's character traits and motives. Hume thought that we share a 'moral sense', a disposition to approve of some things and to disapprove of others, which operates in much the same way in most human beings so long as it is not clouded by misinformation or perverted by self-interest. To say that a trait is a virtue is to say that we would be inclined to approve of it at our unbiased best. We can see here that like Kant (pure Reason was a common human trait), he is trying to produce a fixed point of reference in order to proceed in grounding our moral sense. Hume thought that our moral beliefs are based on feelings rather than reason, namely the feelings of approval and disapproval that we experience. There are moral truths which are made true by natural facts, namely facts about what human beings are inclined to approve of (Hume, An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, 1751).

### Is and ought

One of the most central claims of Hume's theory is that we cannot derive ought from is. He posed the following question in his book 'A Treatise of Human Nature': "In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs, when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is and is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought, or an ought not. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this ought, or ought not, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it shou'd be observ'd and explain'd; and at the same time that a reason shou'd be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it." (Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, 1778). The critical distinction

between these two terms is the following; we cannot derive facts from values, or as Hume puts it, "is" from "ought".

In his theory Hume presented some powerful arguments against the objectivity of ethics. He went against the stoic principle that reason is the moral constable that regulates our mind and behavior. One of his famous arguments is that all claims that can be known by reason are either empirical matters of fact or conceptual truths (for example 'nuns' are women devoted to god or a triangle has 3 sides). Moral claims do not represent empirical matters of facts. Therefore, reason cannot give us moral knowledge. He also highlighted the impossibility of deducing an ought from an is. A moral claim cannot be deduced from a factual claim that describes what is the case.

Let's take the following example-claim; harming an innocent child is wrong. One is not making a logical error when accepting the claim's description that the act of harming is an intentional act in order to cause harm. The failure to conclude that this is an immoral act is indeed an error, but not of logical nature. According to Hume, the logical errors are limited to two kinds: misunderstanding the concepts that one is engaging and mistaking empirical matters of fact. In our claim the error is of a different nature. So, if there is no logical error then there is no reasonable conclusion stated that can be regarded as an ethical fact, as Hume believed that reason is the faculty that gets the truth. The Philosopher argued that there is no such things as moral truth, hence there is no failure of the individual in acquiring it in our claim. (Hume, 1978)

### Sentiments

According to Hume, morality is determined by sentiments; meaning moral judgments are based on sentiments of approval and disapproval that we feel when we consider a person's character from what is named by Hume "a general point of view". By assuming the general point of view, we regulate our sentiments about a person in two ways. First, we view the person not through the eyes of our own interests, but instead through the filter of sympathy, meaning an emotional state generated to us by the feedback acquired from the person himself and his friends, family, neighbors, and colleagues (Hume, 1978, pp. 581-602). We evaluate him in terms of the effects of his character on those with whom he usually associates, what constitute as Hume calls it his "narrow circle" (Hume, 1978, p. 602)

Hume says that moral approval and disapproval themselves are “nothing but a fainter and more imperceptible love or hatred” (Hume, 1978, p. 614). We can love people for any quality that we find pleasant; but one of the main sources of our pleasure is sympathy with the pleasures of others (Korsgaard, 1999). Sympathy is a process that moves me from my idea of what someone is feeling to actually experiencing the feeling. As Hume states himself: “Take any action allow’d to be vicious: Willful murder, for instance. Examine it in all lights and see if you can find that matter of fact, or real existence, which you call vice. In which-ever way you take it, you find only certain passions, motives, volitions and thoughts. There is no other matter of fact in the case. The vice entirely escapes you, as long as you consider the object. You can never find it, till you turn your reflexion into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action. Here is a matter of fact; but ’tis the object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in yourself, not in the object.” (Hume, 1978, pp. 468-469). Hume identifies both what has value and what makes things valuable with equivalent features of our psychology. Our initial, singled out sentiments, passions and affections, as well as actions expressive of them, and are what have moral value. Our sub-sequent reflective sentiments about our own or other people’s sentiments, passions and affections are what give them value. On Hume’s view, morality is entirely a product of human nature and never of self-interest or rational calculations.

He is a humanist, from the point of view that he believes that religion sets out moral codes that are unrealistic for man to achieve. Men are flawed and they continuously sin. Life is to be celebrated not filled with depriving dogmas and restrictions that reduce its celebration. He considered the moral codes of the Stoics and Christianity to harm human nature by dictating men to lead unfree, deprived and ‘dry’ lives. He uses his fourfold classification to undermine Christian conceptions of morality. He makes pride a virtue and humility a vice. He completely disregards the inclusive virtues of the times of celibacy, penance and fasting.

### Kant versus Hume

The most prominent difference in the two moral theories is that of grounding morality in a different source. Kant is using Pure Reason as his primary moral value. He is advocating the demand of a categorical imperative that is contributing to a moral maxim applicable on all men everywhere and at all times. He introduces the idea of self-legislation, legislating for oneself. His rigid concept on



lying, his rule about universalizable maxims is nonsensical without stipulations as to what shall count as a relevant description of an action with a view to constructing a maxim about it.

Hume claims that we receive our moral prompts from our feelings and emotions. He argues that any intentional actions are the immediate product of passions, where we have the category of the direct passions that are attributed to pure instincts. He claims, as other sentimentalists do, that moral intuitions are constituted by an emotional response (feeling) rather than some purely intellectual insight (reason). The philosopher defines truth in such a way as to exclude ethical judgements from it. He also implicitly defines passion in such a way, that aiming at anything is having a passion.

### Criticism

Thomas Reid exercised some severe critique on David Hume's theory. The focus in Reid's analysis is that our will is more than a bundle of perceptions. We are not exclusively guided by passive responses to a thread of stimulations. No matter the plethora of stimulants around us and the ability of our mind making copies and decoding the information it receives. We have active principles that determine the causality of information received. The awareness that we have as creatures that are themselves the source of their own actions grants us the ability to convey causality to our actions and actions around us it is an inference from ourselves to the external world when we ascribe causal powers. We are exercising several powers by doing the work of processing and ascribing causality or meaning to external information or actors.

By ascribing or assigning meaning, computing causality and constructing our will to respond to actions or ideas is what defines us as moral beings. Causality that enacts our will and determination infers responsibility that designates moral worth from our motive to our action. If morality is grounded in sentiment and sentiment is produced by a creature of a certain kind no one is responsible for the functions he is made with, his biology, his anatomy and basic instincts. Some actions that we perform do not derive neither willful nor rational from our control. If we are hungry, we eat. The act of eating is an act of will but not an act of reason. So, we need to separate the sentiment and the rationality. The use of words is fundamental; in order to find a common word, it means you will have to adhere to its common usage (Lehrer, 1987).

## Consequentialism

This theory is also known as teleological ethics. The main thesis of the theory is that 'the morality of an action is contingent on the action's outcome or result. Thus, a morally right action is one that produces a good outcome or consequence'. The issues raised from this theory are that we are not able to establish what sort of consequences count as good ones, how are these consequences judged and who is the one judging them. And lastly, who is the primary beneficiary of moral action.

### Utilitarianism

Inaction is right if it leads to the most happiness for the greatest amount of people. Happiness here is defined as the maximization of pleasure and the minimization of pain. In order to determine the moral status of an action what one considers is the total quantity of pleasure that the action produces and the total quantity of pain; the better the balance of the former over the latter, the better the action is. The action with the best balance of pleasure over pain is the action that one should perform. So, the extent of pleasure or pain is the unit of measuring morality and conducting our state of affairs. Also, the quantity of pain and pleasure defines happiness and morality itself. Utilitarianism is a combination of hedonism and epicureanism.

### For the Greater Good

The tradition, stemming from the late 18th and 19th century English philosophers and economists Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, of an action that is right if it tends to promote happiness and wrong if it tends to produce the opposite of happiness, is called Utilitarianism. Some early traces of this theory can be found in Aristotle's Virtue theory and the pursuit of eudaimonia. The aim of this theory is for the agent to make decision on the basis of a calculation of the consequences. The overall purpose is an act to be deemed moral insofar as it creates the greatest good for the greatest number.

In the theory of utilitarianism there are three propositions: Firstly, actions are to be judged right or wrong solely by virtue of their consequences. Nothing else matters. Secondly, in assessing consequences the only thing that matters is the amount of happiness or unhappiness that is created. Everything else is irrelevant. Thirdly, each person's happiness counts the same (Rachels, 2003, p. 102).

## Bentham

Jeremy Bentham believed that he could create a moral law that would regulate personal and social living. In the base of man's nature there are prevalent emotional elements: pleasure and pain. He argued that morality is not a matter for pleasing God. Nor is it a matter of faithfulness to abstract rules, like reason. Morality is just the attempt to bring about as much happiness as possible in this world. The ultimate moral principle of utilitarianism is the principle of utility. Bentham defined utility as 'instrumental to happiness'. He claimed that all decisions on acts whether they are good or bad can be based on pleasure and pain. In his work 'An Introduction to the Principles of Moral and Legislation' (1799) he states; "Nature has placed man under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure". So, for him these two emotions provide the basis for his moral theory of 'what we ought to do'. His theory was meant to be applied for a legislation reform and throughout his work is evident that he addresses an imaginary 'legislator'. Although pleasure can be used as key for human behavior to be explained he often uses 'pain' as indicator for developing his legal theory. On Bentham's accord, whenever we have a choice between alternative actions or social policies, we must choose the one that has the best overall consequences for everyone concerned.

## Mill on Utility

In Utilitarianism Mill argues that many of the rules of morality are based on the principle of utility. Actions that are not in the general interest we condemn as immoral while those that are in the general interest are morally permissible. Morality can help us decide whether or not to allow harmful actions. If the action harms others but is not judged immoral then we shouldn't interfere with it. It is only those actions that harm others and are also immoral that society should seek to exercise control over. Many traditional rules of sexual morality are like this. example: masturbation, consentual sex out of marriage, homosexuality. And there is a class of self-regarding vices, traits of character that harm only the person themselves.

Bentham and Mill's theory of Utilitarianism is a theory of maximizing pleasure for everyone not just ourselves. This theory in order to reach the satisfying levels of accomplishment for a wider group may require extreme sacrifices and loss. the implications: Morality subject to want accumulates the most pleasure for the larger amount of people which means if killing ten people will save one-hundred, Utilitarianism would have allowed so to happen.

### The harm principle

“The only purpose of which power can be brought any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm on others. his own good either physical or moral is not a sufficient warrant “(Mill, 1966).

Society is built on that principle our laws and policies are based on the universality of that principle. The only categories excluded from it are children and backwards societies. Individuals here /children may need protection against oneself. Backwards societies cannot understand or respond rationally to the harm principle, simply because they disagree on what is good for them. so, society should interfere with someone's actions when they cause harm and when interfering with them is in the general interest. Finally, the harm principle applies to inactions or omissions as well as actions that harm others. The harm principle declares that the only purpose for which power can be legitimately exercised by society over individuals is to prevent harm. Society may use the Lord to regulate conduct that consists in injuring the interests of one another. And society may use public opinion to regulate conduct that may be hurtful to others or wanting in due consideration of their welfare, without going to the length of violating any of their constituted rights. In general, “as soon as any part of a person's conduct affects prejudicially the interests of others society has jurisdiction over it “(Bentham & Lafleur, 1948).

The purpose of Utilitarianism was a legal reform of the time. We will find its basic tenets embedded in the process of our decision-making in most of the democratic governments' public policies. But the theory has tremendous implications of personal rights violations on the grounds of maximizing good. Bentham and Mill do not pay attention to the difficulty of the concept of pleasure.

### The Complication

The theory initially appears ingenious and simple in its tenets; what things are good? One thing and one thing only: happiness. The idea that happiness is the one ultimate good and unhappiness the evil is known as hedonism. It expresses their intuitively possible notion that things are good or bad on account of the way they make us feel. What actions are right? Right actions are the ones that produce most good. Of course, when we start contemplating the concept in a broader extent, we come across some complications that any amount of happiness cannot trump. We value things for their own sakes. It makes us happy to have them but only because we already

think them good. we do not think them good because they make us happy. This is how hedonism gets things the wrong way around as well. Hedonism misunderstands the nature of happiness. happiness is not something that is recognized as good and sought for its own sake, with other things desired only as a means for bringing it about. instead happiness is a response we have to the attainment of things that we recognize as good independently and in their own right.

## The sociological source

### Adam Smith

In his most famous work 'The theory of moral sentiments' Adam Smith grounds morality in our social nature. The core idea is that our moral ideas and actions are a product of our very nature as social creatures. This theory identifies the basic rules of prudence and justice that are needed for society to survive it also explains the additional, beneficent actions that enable it to flourish.

By nature, we have self-interest and sympathy that gradually by conditioning lead to prudence and empathy, for childhood towards adulthood morality formulates inside us. We also have by nature justice and beneficence that that possibly could turn to self-interest but our cultural conditioning and parental control will maintain and so we will learn to live and prosper alongside others without doing them harm. Smith claims in his view that justice stems from our social nature as well. Society and cooperation are indeed a rational source for morality to be fixed as it explains most of the secular unanswered riddles. But it fails to address the emotional complexities of human nature that most are of a spiritual nature. We may be social and practical animals, but we are also deeply spiritual. This is an element that cannot be neglected or ignored (Heilbroner, 2019)

There was an essential issue that Adam Smith and his contemporaries tried to address: 'what was the source of our ability to form moral judgements, including self-reflection and judgement on behaviors in the sphere of dominant feelings such as self-interest and self-preservation. Here Smith introduces the 'inner impartial spectator' with the sole task to approve or disapprove our actions. This 'inner voice' is not easily ignored. This symbolic parallelism is the center of Smith's theory. He perceived people as creatures driven by their passions (one of them being sympathy) and at the same time to be self-regulated by this invisible inner spectator, who is none other than reason itself. This duality allows the capacity and dynamic for the rational and moral faculties to evolve and for our social nature to exceed the minimum trait we were equipped as animals. We can form institutions, rules and develop expectations. In his theory of morals and even in his later work 'The wealth of Nations', Adam Smith mentions the existence of an 'invisible hand' leading men to cooperate with the intent to thrive (Coldwell, 2017).

## Hobbs – Rawls

The social contract tradition finds its natural source in Political philosophy. This branch of philosophy is also called contractarianism as it provides origin and justification for the state authority and the ethical obligations of citizens-subjects to obey the authority in place and the law. The state earns the right to govern by virtue of an agreement among the governed subjects who willingly submit to its given authority, an authority they have validated; and the agreement not to harm one another and obey the law that creates their duty to do so.

Hobbs locates the origin of morality, or the justification of moral conduct, in the rational pursuit of self-interest. He begins his theory by analyzing man's nature and physicality. He says naturally some are stronger than others and will things differently. Although, there are differentiations in our physical traits (strength, speed, height) we are of same species; we are capable of and want similar things. More specifically he states that all human beings are capable of killing each other at any given point in time. His comments on Avel and Cain work as examples of his hypothesis that as men are 'equally' able for certain things, in their capacity to threaten one another and proceed to vile acts, this leads to the conclusion that there is no natural source of morality to order their lives together (Hobbs, Thomas Hobbs 1588-1679).

The social contract theory originated from Plato's Republic, where the ancient philosopher describes a state of innate desire in all men to conquer and overpower their equals in order to rule, rise above all and satisfy their ego. They may be physically gifted and have great chances in achieving so or they might be intellectually advanced and manage to have their way with others. Either way man's natural state is self-interest and self-preserved driven. However, as rational beings they can understand the prospect of not achieving an absolute victory against all other men; very few will make it. So, the improbability of this victory taking place produces a wanted compromise. "From this equality of ability arises equality of hope in the attaining of our ends. And therefore, if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies;" (Hobbs, Leviathan, 1968).

Hobbs takes his theorem further and describes a hypothetical scenario of a natural state where men are free, there are no laws in place, and thus all are capable of everything and anything. In

this pure natural form of freedom there is chaos and fear. Anything that gets in the someone's way is removed, and all can possibly be victimized. By rational thinking we understand that the same way we want to advance our interests, others will want the same. As they are in our way to achieve our goal the same way we ourselves get in theirs. A system without rules or order is a nasty place to live. As Hobbs states himself, life in this realm of natural state is 'solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short'.

Rational people would want to avoid this and change the system and give up some of their natural freedoms in exchange for a civil society. Therefore, Hobbs claims, we are forced to limit our freedom in order to avoid being victimized and restrain ourselves. Of course, by doing so we expect other men will follow through as well. What results after this realization is a system of mutual beneficial cooperation that leaves each of us better off than we would be if we had chosen to exist in a state of nature. Reflecting on morality from this view we see that it is a system restraining people from unlimited pursue of personal gain, and in doing so, provides to its participants the minimum standard of peace and security. So, the key from saving the world from chaos, Hobbs said, is a contract. He is arguing a contractarian theory, where the primary element of morality is social co-operation. When a group of free thinking, rational people comes together, morality simply emerges. Free, rational, self-interested people realize that there are more benefits to be found in cooperating than in not cooperating. Contractarianism claims that right acts are those that do not violate the free, rational agreements that people have made with one another. There are explicit contracts like an exchange of goods in trade or implicit contracts like reaping the benefits of civil society and in return paying taxes (Lloyd, 2019).

### The Weakness

But, like all theories it has its weaknesses. Say for example that one has signed off to a set of these rules but finds an opportunity to break one or a series of them and in the process or in result to receive goods or fortune. If the state, he lives in is well-structured then penalties for such violations will discourage someone in doing so. Let's imagine that he has figured out a way to get away from any repercussions and that the result of his actions will promote his self-interests. Shouldn't he then go ahead and violate the law? Hobbs poses that same question in his work and gives an answer that is open to various interpretations. The deep problem in contractarianism stems from an assumption of rational egoism, also called rational selfishness and is the principle of an action being rational only if it maximizes one's self-interests. This is a critical complication for the theory of contractarianism as it shifts morality according to the standards the self-interest



sets in rationality. The grounds for someone to enter such a social agreement – contract would be to escape of the state of nature and thereby amplify self-interest. If there is an opportunity of thriving without abiding to most restrictions imposed by moral rules the contract includes then there is no reason to stick by them.

The proposed solution for such a complication is delivered by John Rawls in his work *A Theory of Justice* (1971). Rawls as a political philosopher provides insight from the aspect of political science and mainly addresses issues for social institutions as well as the problem of distributive justice. Although he does not get directly involved with morality, we can extrapolate a well-developed ethic from his theory that applies in our earlier conundrum. On his account, the only way to distill true principles of justice would be if it was agreed from the parties involved that they would participate as mutually disinterested, rational people have been placed 'under a veil of ignorance'. This veil strips away all objectivism and characteristics from the contractors that would influence their deliberations for genuine standards of justice. There are no distinguished features that classify the participants by race, wealth, religion, sex, social status and thus the process is fair. The idea is that the provided level of impartiality will grant the necessary clarity in order for those behind the veil to device rules that would be even and fair for everyone (both sides of the veil) (Sandel, Harvard Justice Series, 2009).

## The Biological source

### Darwinism

We are prone to protect and preserve ourselves and others around us not only because we are driven by self-interest but also kin-interest. Darwin in his descent of man treats 4 issues he's considering firstly, whether man like every other species is descended from some pre-existing other form than what is currently known. Secondly, the manner and course of this development. Thirdly, the value of the differences between the races of men. And lastly, the most important question for the context of this research; what the origin of the moral sense or conscience is. Approached from the side of Natural History, the highest of the physical faculties of man his conscience. Darwin wants to investigate the scope of his theory of descent for understanding humans' moral sense. He believes it is possible to clarify man's capacity for morality which we consider specifically human based on purely scientific research. Nevertheless, he does not reject traditional concept of ethics and religion but combines them in his framework of natural law. His main claim is that as living organism, we humans are part of an organic natural environment but as self-conscious agents, reflective beings we can go beyond this natural realm.

Darwin's evolutionary anthropology tried to explain how our bodily structure affects our evolution but also the origin of our emotions, conscience and of the moral sense. For Darwin sympathy is the primary principle of all social instincts and animals as well as a basic element of moral sense. It is the only one that interlinks us to our non-human predecessors. At the same time Darwin adheres to the idea that morality is a uniquely human trait not reducible to animal instincts. Without traces of such sympathetic instincts a human being would be an unnatural monster. In his theory of descent, he emphasizes the history of evolution of animals and humans and the continuity between them, as well as unique correct traits that we observe only in humans and these are: self-consciousness, verbal language and morality. Darwin does not claim though that the reverse can happen; that humans' moral sense can be reduced to animals' social instincts

### A natural selection

Breeders select those individuals of a race which have certain traits or characters useful for the

breeders' purpose and let them propagate. In the course of many generations these trades as long as they can be inherited gradually prevail and extend the evolutionary form of the breeder. In free nature there is an analogous mechanism of selection the same way the breeder chooses and the process that is followed by generation to generation in order to lead to an altered version of the initial individual selected by the breeder. This mechanism of selection here is nature; it selects specific trades that are useful for an organism itself in its environment.

Darwin proceeds from the observation that two organisms of the same species are never completely identical. There are always differences between them, variations, however small they may be, and thus also differences in the organism's adaptation to environment. These organisms or individuals of a species whose trades are better adapted to their environment have a higher chance of survival and average bear more offspring than the others. This means that a natural selection of the better adapted organism takes place. Via inheritance these advantages for the survival of these organism can be accumulated over passing to generations and so over long periods of time finally new species evolve. This gradual natural selection subject to the passing of time and trait accumulation becomes dynamic and separates the species that are weaker from the dominant ones. Species descend from other species and from one species several other ones evolve by adapting to different places (Engels, 2016).

Opposed to artificial selection there is no designated breeder in nature who chooses organisms for propagation with an agenda. Since Darwin rejected the idea of a creator as the intelligent designer of species, he had to discover a natural mechanism fulfilling the function of selection. What he proceeds to do is name this natural mechanism 'the struggle' for life or existence and refers to the law of population. As human populations becoming large exhibit stability there must be a mechanism which limits this increase. Darwin applied this concept in his theory that another philosopher advanced before him.

### Population Checks

Thomas Robert Malthus was a political philosopher and a clergy man. He examined spatially the populations growth and productions/consumption of natural resources, he studied birth and death rates and came up with on the Principle of Population. Malthus examined the relationship between population growth and resources. From this, he developed the Malthusian theory of population

growth in which he wrote that population growth occurs exponentially, so it increases according to birth rate, decreases by death rate. For example, if every member of a family tree reproduces, the tree will continue to grow with each generation. On the other hand, food production increases arithmetically, so it only increases at given points in time. Malthus wrote that, left unchecked, populations can outgrow their resources.

According to Malthus, there are two types of 'checks' that can reduce a population's growth rate. Preventive checks are voluntary actions people can take to avoid contributing to the population. Because of his religious beliefs, he supported a concept he called moral restraint, in which people resist the urge to marry and reproduce until they are capable of supporting a family. This often means waiting until a later age to marry. He also wrote that there are 'immoral' ways to check a population, such as vices, adultery, prostitution, and birth control. Due to his beliefs, he favored moral restraint and didn't support the latter practices.

Positive checks to population growth are things that may shorten the average lifespan, such as disease, warfare, famine, and poor living and working environments. According to Malthus, eventually these positive checks would result in a Malthusian catastrophe (also sometimes called a Malthusian crisis), which is a forced return of a population to basic survival. (Malthus, 1798)

Darwin managed to apply the idea of natural selection to free nature after reading Malthus' essay. The term struggle of life faced a lot of controversy as it was a generic framework that adhered to all difficulties faced from a living organism in order to survive. Scarcity and resources are one of the reasons. But even in situations of abundance of food there can be a struggle for life with unpredictable outcomes of reproduction. Cognitive social and moral faculties can be as important as bodily vigor in the struggle for life in which only the fittest survive, where fit meant adopted to fulfil the demands of a given situation. (Spencer, 1864)

### The theory of descent

Darwin before treating the fourth question of the origin of the moral sense he first had to give account in evidence for his assumption that man has descended from animals. Showing the similarities between animals of different species of the same class or of different classes of the same sex demonstrated his argument. There are 3 criteria that have been established in so far

by various experts of all sorts of disciplines, these criteria were called homologies, one of them is the resemblance of embryos of different species, another one is organs which have lost their function that they previously had earlier in a different organism. Darwin argues that the best explanation for this phenomenon is that all organisms have a common source that they descend from a common ancestor and they simply followed their adaptation to different conditions of life.

A key point in human evolution is the evolution of the upright posture, which resulted in other bodily changes in particular the development of the brain and its specific human functions. Man's upper extremities were further developed with a more refined sense of touch the function of the opposable thumb in other morphological changes in the inner body cavity, a redistribution of bodily functions. The most important change which was the evolution of the organ of the brain is what allowed men to articulate language, originated from imitation of one another in producing sounds. Human evolution was going hand in hand with the changes of the brain the truly human faculties such as human speech intellectual, social and moral faculties had evolved in such extent that they have become permanent.

Man didn't have to struggle to adjust himself to the world he began having the means now to adjust the world around him mankind took its dominant position in the world, this supremacy to intellectual qualities, self-consciousness, self-reflection, verbal communication, social qualities, self-reflection and ability for calculus and categorizing. Due to the fact that man has descended from non-human being who were already equipped with social instinct Darwin believed that humans do not enter this world as tabula-rasa, empty vessel but rather equipped with an evolutionary heritage of social disposition there are certain natural dispositions that science has researched and proven that are evident even the infant aged only 14 to 18 months old (Tomasello 2009).

Darwin wished to provide evidence for the unity of all mankind by showing common human universals across different cultures and races. He has this idea about the roots of human empathy impress human animals and he is supporting it by showing that in some instances some of our primate relatives like the race of monkeys have a sense of fairness, even embryonic form of empathy for others other than their kin. Do humans have mental faculties due to the inherited form of cognitive systems from our predecessors? Some other animals they have not inherited only instinct but also intellectual prompts. Humans are the only living being capable of morals. There is a peculiar trait evident only in humans; the act of blushing. No animal has this ability. The cause of blushing in the context of morals is the thought that others think that we are guilty

or not that we are guilty of something that is not considered good or virtuous and produces the feeling of shame inside us. The ability to blush presupposes the capacity for reflection.

As many animals possess the ability of social instincts the same way men descending from them inherited those social traits. As our progenitors did not come into this world as *tabula rasa*, but equipped with social instincts and abilities, one of the most important elements that stands out among those traits is the element of sympathy. Sympathy is generated from the caring expressed from one member of the tribe to the other leading to a general effort to preserve the community. Other traits of social instincts include parental affections cooperation trustworthiness sociability entertainment. According to Darwin sympathy is the cornerstone for the evolution of our moral sense. "The instinctive sympathy is the route of our moral sense or conscience because our moral sense like the instinctive sympathy is directed towards the good of the community not towards our own happiness" (Darwin {1887} 1989, 137). Although our ancestors inherited these social instincts that assisted the development of our moral sense and judgement, in the later days of human evolution those inherited instincts slowly were reduced in several ways, by strength, by inheritance, by number. The reduction of these primary instincts is the condition off the development for our genuine moral sense.

For Darwin human morality is a complex phenomenon that involves empathy, sympathy, virtue, social instinct, self-reflection and reasoning. All these different capabilities, emotions and instincts form the matrix of morality. Although most animals do manifest behaviors which amongst the human race would be considered moral, they are not considered moral agents void their self-reflection and reasoning inabilities. On reverse if human actions do not comply with moral values when done without reasoning they do not strip the human status from the agent. Although "the first foundation or origin of the moral sense lies in the social instincts including sympathy" (Darwin (1887) 1989, II, 637). That which we inherited from our pre human ancestors; they do not comprise alone as an undisputed source in order to fully account for the origin of our moral sense. Genuine morality consists in our conscience by formulating a concept of right and wrong available and accessible only to humans. According to Darwin the moral sense tells us what to do what is right and we ought to do, while the conscience reprimands if we disobey it. We have an internal lawgiver, and this is our moral sense; in our conscience is the authority that validates the course of action prescribed by our moral sense (Darwin (1877) 1989, 121).

The moral faculties of humans are traced in the natural history and course of men's evolution, in the social instincts as well as the mental abilities of non-human animals, who served as pre human predecessors. This course of development starting from pre human predecessors through semi human and finally to modern humans is incomplete and incapable of giving a solid explanation for the origin of our moral sense in our conscience. Humans inherited social instincts that later became instinctive prompt and urges that guided our predisposition to desire the well-being of our tribe or fellow humans but there are gaps and unknown territories throughout this course of evolution.

#### Our natural calling on morality

Instinctive mental abilities in verbal language are conditions necessary for human morals to be evolved. From the early times mankind frequently combined habit, cultural factors and instinct; a process which today called the coevolution of nature and culture. There is a theory that describes the inheritance of acquired character's habits practiced over a long period of time and can become permanent trait for living organisms. This theory is called the Lamarckian theory. According to its concept relies Darwin's effort to explain our natural disposition towards a moral sense. At a certain point we acquired the trait of sympathy which started involving further and becoming more of a sentiment that was prevalent in guiding our course of action. So, morals become increasingly cultural phenomenon although rooted in natural history.

Darwin describes progress more as an expanding circle of sympathy of humanity. The more human evolves the more his social instincts develop. The increase of emotions and expanding tendencies for cooperation, caring and protection in the tribe create traits that all members of the tribe must share in order to be inclusive and not shunned upon. Furthermore, the occurrence of these traits becoming frequent practice, forming habits and repetition or mimetic routes that are customarily followed. After all this slow process of transformation the social instincts bloom to moral tendencies and become mores and customs, creating a viable culture that will carry them like the DNA code from generation to generation. These moral traits will form the basis for friendships, social cohesion, trustworthiness, credibility and social recognition that will form strong social bonds between the members of this group. The tribe that exhibits the most of these traits is more likely to thrive and conquer other tribes that will not be as unified and advanced.

## Observations

The advantages of ethology are evident in observation of animals. Animals are not just crude creatures they have social traits basic ones that are in use and a set of values is on display. This set of values the animals use could easily be considered as the original matrix of morality. There is a level of competition incorporated in survival instincts and affection and they harmoniously coexist (Engels, 2016). Any two organisms may be in competition if they both need or want something; they cannot both get the same thing. In nature most organisms are not even conscious, and competition is an extremely rare thing. The idea that man evolved as the fittest and dominated earth because we deliberately competed with all other species may have a stand, but nature is not competitive. It relies on a cooperation between its food chains. If there was a war against all, the biosphere would have never developed in the first place. The ladder of the pyramid of evolution presents the evolutionary process as an ascending triangle existing for the sole purpose of producing man as its apex.

## Behaviorism versus Sociobiology

There are two objections. The behaviorists thesis is that human beings have no natural disposition at all being blank paper at birth, this sociobiological thesis is that social disposition does exist but are all in some sense selfish. We don't have to be selfish just because our genes are, we are more than mere prompts or deliverances of our senses. Darwin's famous claim was that 'Evolution is a-moral.' What simply happened is that the social instincts animals had advanced to social feelings in man. Whilst animals remained evolutionary to their level of instincts, man evolved his instincts to emotions. There is a distinction of evolutionary differentiation; the degree shifted not the value.

## The origin of moral sense

Darwin's explanation for the origin of the moral sense. There are many arguments that describe man's qualities that are distinct from other animals' and the primary reason be that only man has moral sense or conscience. Darwin's argument begins by reminding us that man is a social animal. He describes this social nature based on the examples of family, tribe life and society. He



compares these 'social instincts' with similar ones in other species; ants and bees live in colonies and they have social structure.

By 'social instincts' Darwin means natural predispositions that species have embedded genetically and dictate behaviors such as seeking companionship, having feelings for our fellows and follow a form of social order. Unlike the basic social bees and ants, humans developed further these 'instincts' reaching higher forms of social structure in their behaviors and tendencies. What crucially determined this process was the evolution of the feeling 'sympathy'. It broke the barriers of a limited sense of sympathy animals express one for the other and developed to an elaborate 'feeling' that overwhelms the human conscience.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary online defines sympathy as the "act or capacity of entering into or sharing the feelings or interests of another". It is "an affinity, association, or relationship between persons or things wherein whatever affects one similarly affects the other" (Merriam-Webster, 2020). The etymology of the word comes from the Latin *sympathia*, from Greek *sympatheia*, from *sympathēs* having common feelings, sympathetic, from *syn+* *pathos* (feelings, emotion, experience). The first known use of the word was in 1579. This intensification of the feeling sympathy generated a moral sense distinctive only in humans. Although, the feeling of sympathy intensifies in combination with human intelligence, plus sympathy has a prominent place in social instincts, Darwin did not argue that the social instincts together with intelligence gave rise to a moral sense. He was perplexed and did not discover the source.

Darwin criticized both opinions, from Hume and Adam Smith, regarding the role of sympathy in the formation of our moral sense. He stressed the fact that sympathy is not a simple psychological ability to "reproduce former states of pain or pleasure". He promoted its state from being part of the social instincts to having a biological base. This biological background is what amplifies its strength for expression to our close kin than a mere stranger. This is a turning point for the development of ethics that I will discuss further down.

### Peter Singer

Peter Singer is an Australian moral philosopher. He is a Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University and specializes in applied ethics and approaches ethical issues from a secular, utilitarian perspective. What he has claimed is that today we have the technological advantage to research and find answers to the question 'where ethics comes from'; whether its

origin is culture or nature or whether morality is objectively true. He poses the question if using evolution to understand all these questions and answers, actually help us. He believes that our instinctive reactions and intuitions should be the focal point of moral research (Singer, JSTOR, The Journal of Ethics, vol. 9, no. 3/4, 2005, pp. 331-352).

### One family

Our internal urge to act morally doesn't really assist our evolutionary course. Altruism is when an organism acts in such a manner which benefits another organism's odds for survival and some cost to its own. (Reciprocal altruism – Robert Tr. 1971) Those who abide with reciprocal altruism will prosper when the others will be excommunicated and exiled. Organisms are first vessels for genes. Genes move in humans and animals through generations, according to how well adjusted they are to their environment. We are evolutionary programmed to protect the survival of not necessarily ourselves but of our genes.

The primary means to pass on our genes is by reproduction. The absolute altruism traits are in the parent-child relationships. The parental altruism fits the bill of absolute altruism. By sharing common genes, as we are programmed to pass them on, we tend to protect our own kin which starts from our family and it extends to absolute strangers. The reproductive tree of human evolution or as religion puts it “we all come from Adam and Eve”, we share common genes indicating our shared human nature but with lowered genetic similarity, which explains the priority of care. First, we care for ourselves and family and then for others, strangers etc. The levels of care are the hierarchy of care. So, we protect the survival of our kin in order to protect the survival of our genes in a more expanding circle, as P. Singer claims in his book, “the expanding circle (of Morality)”. So, morality in other words is built in our nature. We take care of ourselves, then our families, then our friends and colleagues, then strangers; and the circle keeps expanding. We have traits and tendencies built in our system. (Singer, A companion to Ethics, 1991)

### Churchland

Patricia Churchland is an analytic philosopher and a professor emerita in the university of California, San Diego. She has contributed in the fields of philosophy, neuroscience, philosophy of the mind and neuroethics. She has coined the term ‘neurophilosopher’ in an attempt to describe

herself professionally. Her research was focused in the 'interface between neuroscience and philosophy with a current association of morality and the social brain'. One of the questions she has researched and considered a fundamental drive since Plato's time is 'where do moral values come from?' (Churchland, 2011) She acknowledges the fact as a scientist that the brain is indeed a product of human evolution. She argues that the human brain in its basic functions has extreme similarities with the brains of a range of other species, monkeys, rodents, reptiles and flies. Our nervous system is responsible for prompting our body to fulfill its needs in food, rest, protection and reproduction. Churchland claims that everything else that advanced further than these primal prompts is an 'improvement'. Our development of the unique traits that declared us humans were modifications and extensions of primary material that was already there. Her famous quote is 'to understand the mind, we must understand the brain' (Churchland, Patricia, 2020).

In her book 'Braintrust', she argues that morality originates from the biology of the brain. She deconstructs the existing concepts of morality's origins and she urges us to reevaluate the 'priority given to religion, absolute rules and pure reason in accounting for the basis of morality'. Source as above). She demonstrates a link between the origins of morality and our comprehension of our ability to demonstrate our social nature and our caring intentions towards others. According to her, the concepts of ethics and morality are conducts that are composed by a series brain functions: affinity, habituation of social practices, sympathy, identification of others' feelings. She is deeply focused on the origin of values. As a scientist she understands and explains that the brain as an organ cannot value something, but a certain process from our nervous system is responsible for a form of evaluation. This process, that is basically a caring mechanism, initiates our drive to care for others and prioritizes our self-care over self-neglect, ensuring our wellbeing. This is the survival instinct that is enabled automatically. Now, morality is an addition to the initial matrix of primal drives and it is created by the upgrade of self-care to fellow feelings.

There are some scientists and philosophers who claim that our social skills drive is genetically embedded in us. Churchland is sceptic and argues that she doesn't believe in presence of an innateness that could explain universal traits and capacities of humans (Churchland, 2011, p. 5). She argues that intuitions display social practices that can be absorbed by life in different surroundings. She agrees with David Hume that reason cannot produce morality but rather compliments it and takes it to new direction. Reason is connected with emotion, but primal inclinations should not be analyzed by reason (Churchland, 2011:102) The neurophilosopher expanding on the aristotelean theory of virtue, she mentions that values are produced by the systemic practice of social behaviors that are considered accepted and rewarding. As the

members of the group adopt by habit these practices it is easy to discern what is morally right or wrong. And as time goes by, the next generations are also able to recognize good from bad practices from past experiences. The process of satisfaction is enabled by the rewarding feelings 'doing the right thing' produces. She raises the question if values exist in order to satisfy our peers or to pursue feelings of rewarding. Unfortunately as they do not have a universal character they cannot provide guidelines or sets of rules to follow. They are subject to culture and social understanding. And for that reason, Churchland rejects the universality of Kant's categorical imperatives, Aristotle's 'golden rule' and Bentham's equation of utility. She believes that morality is not about rule-making and it is impossible to apply the same set of guidelines to every situation. There are so many different cultures in the world and values differ from one people to another. She accepts that rules are set for a reason and are necessary to some extent. As a product of reason, rules come to reinforce what the actual moral drive is. According to Churchland our center of moral decision-making is directed by a 'constraint satisfaction', which is activated when we value self-care and fellow feelings (Churchland, 2011:192).

## The Anthropological origin

Where are we coming from? Did God create us? How was earth created? Science and Religion are still trying to answer these questions. All research and analysis fall back in the same motif of this unanswered rhetoric. Where is morality coming from? Science is still unable to explain with undisputed proof or facts, how humans out of all species in the planet advanced in such a degree not just to dominate the other animals but to reach unimaginable scientific levels. We still have no valid proof, only theories, of our origin and course in the early beginning of time. Scientists fail to understand our brain, how our conscience works, what is our soul. Some of the biggest mysteries that reason and science failed to resolve, the faith to the Divine granted a set of explanations. We will start with the anthropological versions.

## The birth of conscience

If we really want to trace back the origins of moral intuition, we must study some of the very first groups of humans considered culturally modern. According to Kim Sterelny and a paper he wrote on the evolutionary theory for the Journal of the Royal Society in 2011, The new capacity these first groups developed for symbolic thought and the perhaps perfection of language assisted in the creation of controlled and familiar environments that enabled them to thrive. "Humans became behaviorally modern when they could reliably transmit accumulated informational capital to the next generation and transmit it with sufficient precision for innovations to be preserved and accumulated." (Sterelny, 2011). These first societies of humans acknowledged the fact that remaining together, hunting in groups, gathering food, exploring and securing their territories, being collectively responsible for their groups' safety and work, was vital for their survival. All anthropologists agree that the landmark dates when humans became culturally modern is between 45,000-100.000 years ago.

## Research in primates

Christopher Boehm, an evolutionary anthropologist, gave an interview to the Smithsonian where he claims that morality was born when conscience developed in humans. In his new book he

explains how after he observed for more than 40 years primates and studied different human cultures to understand social and moral behavior, he formed the hypothesis that “human morality emerged along with big game hunting. When hunter-gatherers formed groups”, he explains, “survival essentially boiled down to one key tenet—cooperate or die.” (Boehm, 2012)

His hypothesis is that humans begun acknowledging the benefits of cooperation with food-gathering. The activity of hunting which was vital to their sustenance created bounding relations between the food-gatherers and it flourished when the hunters moved to seek bigger mammals to kill. The interplay of reliance to the gatherers from the rest of the group and the satisfaction of accomplishment was prominent. These traits are nothing new as we have observed them in other animal societies as well. Of course, as in all groups there were some more dominant figures, the alpha males, that on occasion their behavioral patterns were disruptive to the collective character of the group.

Those individuals when out of control they were marginalized from the rest of the group and shun upon. So here we have the first collective appearances of moral characteristics born out basic cultural events; recognition and appreciation to successful hunter-gatherers, codependence of gatherers and tribe, marginalization and exclusion of non-cooperative individuals. These events place value on the act of cooperation making it vital for existence. Subsequently, recognition and exclusion gave birth to admiration, self-control, discipline and punishment. If the alphas couldn't exert self-control, they were exiled from the group. Something, which back then, equaled death. (Boehm, 2012)

### Frans De Waal

France De Waal is a Dutch primatologist and ethologist. His research centers on primate social behavior, including conflict resolution, cooperation, inequity aversion, and food-sharing. Biological anthropology is also in the race of finding where morality stems from. De Waal believes that natural selection can be harsh but it has produced highly successful species that survive through co-operation and mutual assistance. He identifies this paradox as the key to an evolutionary account of morality. This claim demonstrates that human morality could never have developed without the foundation of fellow feelings our species share with other animals. A morality grounded in biology leads to an entirely different conception of what it means to be human and humane (Waal, 2005)

In one of his articles he talks of the relation between science and religion. He urges for a cooperation of the two in order to assist better the human race. He also thinks that they serve different purposes and domains. "Science is not in their business of spelling out there meaning of life and even less in telling us how to live our lives." He believes that scientists are good at finding out why things are the way they are or how things work. He also mentions the argument that cultured is steeped in religious affluences and affects all aspects of human life. "It is impossible to know what morality would look like without religion. It would require a visit to a human culture that is not now and never was religious. That such cultures do not exist, should give us pause." (Catapano & Critchley, 2017)

## Cultural Relativism

### How 'relative' things are?

The opinion that 'different cultures have different moral codes' is widely known and accepted since ancient times. There are up until today so many different cultures throughout history with different mores and customs that some of them would shock us or disgust us. Nonetheless, humans throughout time developed social traits that incorporated in their cultures and became an accepted moral code that everyone abides with. The tolerance of other peoples' 'ways' is based on the developed theory that we should try and understand a person's beliefs, values and practices, instead of judging them against the criteria of another. There are many examples that can be mentioned but the presentation of three will suffice. Taken from different periods of time we have three different cultures and their take on what the western civilized world would consider today grave human rights violations. The first one is the female circumcision that is still widely practiced. The second one is cannibalism, with sub-cultural extension tied to the eating of the dead, instead of burning or burial and the third can be the pedophilia (early age marriage contracts).

All three examples can be substantiated in the context of necessity, evolution and custom but they are nonetheless repulsive in nature and below current moral standards. In the case of Cultural Relativism, science cannot identify truth but can record customs that vary from place to place. While social scientists can observe and document such mores and customs, explanations need to be grounded by reference to the framework (cultural context) in which they develop and exist (Boudon, 2008). As an ethical system fully embraced by society puts us in a dangerous

terrain as it is based in the idea that there is no ultimate standard of good and evil, so every judgement about right and wrong is a product of society. There are no absolute moral standards.

#### A complication

The problem that arises of course if we try to attribute all differences and separate practices with other cultures or traditions is that of the erosion of reason. If we do not have a fixed point of reference and we keep shifting it, from culture to culture, then morality shifts as well! The examples can be quite a few, from the culture of Nazis to the attractive benefits of smoking in the 50's. Let's not forget that cigarettes were once literally what the doctor prescribed! So, cultural relativism should be subject to knowledge and testing. Unfortunately, the theory limits knowledge to the boundaries of each culture-case and provides no testing framework for its moral validity statements. This theory is widely embraced in the 21st century. Globalization and the spread of the concept of tolerance have destroyed the fixed perspective on things considered wrong or acceptable. There is a reason why some things are considered wrong and others not. And, Cultural Relativism cannot override the natural imperatives of reasoning humans have. As this theory is non-sensical the belief that there must be some fundamental absolutes of right and wrong that apply in all known world is still valid.



## Perception and linguistics

### Communication tool

Plato and Aristotle believed, each one of us was born with an “essence”, made out of certain “properties” that dictated our perceptions in life (Ricoeur, 2013). Biology and Cognitive Science are still developing theories about how some moral genomes pass on to our DNA, recognized later as predispositions, urges or tendencies.

Perceive: The etymology comes from the Latin ‘percipere’=understand, seize and according to the English Dictionary it means awareness of something through the senses, intuitive understanding and regard. Man is the only animal who is aware for the moral quality of his actions. In reflecting upon ourselves we are able to evaluate our actions and thus estimate the extent to which they fall short of a norm or an ideal. The process of evaluation is more than self-consciousness, it is evident self-judgment. The power to grasp the quality of our thoughts and action by evaluating it in the light of an ideal or a norm, defining the good, is the essence of a man's moral capacity. This is what makes a man and moral being.

Language is one of our nuanced and powerful tools. Being the first proof of the culturally modern primates, language elevated the cooperative spirit already ruling the tribes back then to the ability to form social structures within the group. Animals communicate as well; they have languages and codes that they comprehend. A major difference between humanity and animals is that the former has the ability to draw its behavioral motivation from the community in order to complement and even over-ride biologically driven behavior. For this ability to be successfully managed two modal qualities are required; language for cognitive matters and ritual for emotional matters. After serving its first and foremost purpose which is basic communication, language in more complex frameworks begins to show its inadequacies. But language is also a living phenomenon and like most living things there's going to be change and variation.

The German Philosopher Gottlob Frege draw a distinction between what he named sense and reference of a word. The word has, a sense which is the way it is tied to a concept or an object and a reference which is the what is meant to designate. So, although the reference of some words is the same, they have different senses. When the condition of necessity and sufficiency is

met then a word receives its meaning (Thau & Caplan, 2001). As long as a community that is linguistic uses a word in a particular way it retains that meaning. We make up new words as we need them, as we go along and at the same time words also fall out of use or take an entirely new meaning. This theory implies that meaning of words is tight to the needs of a community that uses language. If we think about the regional differences in words that are tight to specific groups or sub-communities, this will lead us to the conclusion that the meaning of the word is still valid as long as someone still uses that word in such way.

### Ludwig Wittgenstein

Wittgenstein was an Austrian Philosopher who lived in the 20th century. He worked primarily on the philosophy of the mind, logic and the philosophy of language. The need to refer to his theory of language at his early stage is necessary from the point of view that language is insufficiently equipped to provide the proper accommodations for us to define concepts like morality in order to understand it or ground it somewhere. Of course, this is not a discouragement, but it is though an important admission of inability that must be stated. Wittgenstein spoke of ethics and religion together. Although there are as theme evident to his works as his life and work progressed, he referred to them less and less. His main argument, involving the inadequacy of language, was that the mystical truths, such as morality or god, cannot be expressed meaningfully. This statement was of the utmost importance for him as it suggested that man is not meant to understand everything but would be best to exercise our judgement only in matters that are known to us.

According to Wittgenstein's philosophy of language, linguistics plays a primary role on how we understand, explain and define abstract notions. Language is a nuanced and powerful tool. We know and learn the meaning of words from the way they are used by other members of our same linguistic community. Our mind synthesizes the meaning of words by breaking down and putting together variables of use in context in a process called 'Family Resemblance'. In short, this process is a recognition of word-meanings that are called word-clusters. There is not a specific one element that all clusters have in common, but they all do share something with some of the other clusters-members of the group. For example, a family has three children, a son and two daughters. One of them has the father's nose, the other two the mother's hair and eyes. The children do not have some characteristic directly in common but resemble both their parents. In

the cluster, not every concept is equal, but there are some that everyone recognizes the same and accepts. These ones can be pictured in the middle or the center of a cluster. As we move to the outer edges, we find the so-called fringe cases; the ones that some people would include, and others would exclude in their cluster-group. This is an imaginary illustration of how some of the most important notions in life are grasped differently from man to man and most importantly from culture to culture and from time to time (Wittgenstein, 1965).

### Wittgenstein's Box

Imagine that each one of us has a box. Inside that box there is a thing, something. That thing in the box let's say that it is a beetle, but no one can see inside anyone else's box ever. We all call the hidden thing in the box as 'beetle', but we have no idea whether the content of our boxes is the same because we can't see in each other's box. So, Wittgenstein claims "there is no way we can meaningfully use the word beetle in this context, because we have no way of verifying what others mean when they use the word, and they have no way of verifying what we mean when we use the word. This is meant to illustrate how it is impossible to directly communicate our subjective experiences to one another" (Wittgenstein, 1965).

We all use the word 'red' in order to refer to the color of what we see when we look at stop signs or an apple, but I have no way of knowing if you are actually seeing the same thing that I am seeing. I don't know if your pain feels like my pain or your love feels like my love. Our minds are like boxes no one else can see what's inside. So, ultimately it doesn't matter, because beetle just means content of the box; what's inside the box. The point is we don't know if the color red in my mind is the same as the color red in your mind because the color red is a beetle in a box. It's a label for what's in our mind. The conclusion driven out of this syllogism is that language cannot refer directly to an internal state like what is color red or what pain feels like. Instead it can only refer to the aspect of it that is publicly observable by other people (Wittgenstein, 1965). Example: we can give meaning to a word just by using it. What if we change the word of an assigned meaning and replace it with a new word for example if we started calling mangoes as 'kozlaps' (made up word). By constant use of the new word in replacement of the old word but by maintaining the same content and meaning eventually the old name word world disappear and they knew one will take its place.

## The Inadequacy of Language

Most of us are aware of the myth or parable of the Tower of Babel. All the earth had the same language and the same words. Each said to his neighbors, "let us build a city and make a name for ourselves." YHWH said, "Look, it is one people, and one language for all of them. Let us go down and confuse their speech there, so that each will not understand the language of his neighbor." (Genesis 11.1, 4). The need people felt for power and establishment, the arrogance that they can reach the Heavens, forced the Hand of God to punish them again. And punishments came in the form of hindrances (Lowenthal, 2011).

If we alter our reality, then our perception of things changes. Accordingly, our thoughts and our course of actions change. But the truth in the matter is that ultimately reality doesn't change. It can be distorted, simulated but not altered. So, what actually 'changes' is the fact that our perceptors work differently in giving us different clues about our environment. The primary way we realize and perceive the world around us is our five senses, our five perceptors, transmitting data to the ultimate preceptor which is our brain. The complexities of the brain are studied mainly from the following sciences: Neuroscience, Cognitive Science, Psychology and Psychiatry. Our brain uses our senses to map our environment; it collects evidence and produces what we call reality. The human species has some common functionality in certain procedures for the majority of its population; we collect material the same way and produce results that are matching and recognizable, leading us to the same logical conclusion.

The same procedures used for object analysis and definition people use to define abstract values or notions such as freedom, love, justice, friendship, malice, hope. I believe that the scope of definition here although touching base and for most of the human race the better portion of it is fully perceived and understood, there is a percentage from that definition that involves disputes, limitations and even exceptions. In a Journal's article of Wittgenstein's "A lecture on Ethics", there is a point where the Professor says: "in ethical and religious language we seem constantly to be using similes. But a simile must be the simile for something. And if I can describe a fact by means of a simile must also be able to drop the simile and describe the facts without it" (Wittgenstein, 1965). In connection to the linguistic importance in our moral codes we can also discuss its extension to cultural relativism.

## Thoughts

Goldwin Smith analyzed in one of his articles for the North American Review journal, morality is not an abstract feeling nor an instinct. It is something further than 'a divine revelation or a metaphysical necessity'. He states clearly that 'it is simply another name for the rule of reason applied to human action and regulating man's natural appetites, desires, and affections for the good of the individual, the family, the community, the kind'. Reason keeps our impulses, our exceeding desires of the common rule, in check. It is the faculty inside us that controls our most primal instincts. Smith goes ahead and describes for each aspect of the human life, what it means for reason to inhibit it. He addresses the core pillars of human existence; individuality, family, country, humanity, and he names the form of reason that regulates each one; temperance and frugality, domestic duty, civic duty and general benevolence. For him, duty is 'another name for the observance of rules essential to our welfare in the different aspects of our being'. He grounds its origins in the beginning of human reasoning and reflection. And as he describes the road of moral evolution, he describes a path of consecutive adaptations of an original matrix of morality, subject to time subject to the variables of race, circumstance, fashion and progress of civilization. He prescribes the unity of morality in the condition of uniformity of the human race. For as long as humans share this uniformity, the general rules of morality will equally emerge from all men's breasts. His analysis as such it goes contrary to the belief that morality was 'implanted' in our chests by Nature or a Creator. Although, he continues and describes that 'unknown power' that attracts our deepest subconscious desires, beyond morality, for an archetype, an authority that forms the design of our soul or conscience. He names it 'a moral ideal'. He connects to Aristotle's theory of how the aesthetics give birth to ethics through admiration and imitation. We can identify the 'highest good', the moral excellence that an idea or a role model withholds and we aspire to cultivate it in us or others. This moral beauty fills our soul with a gratification unmeasurable to satisfactions produced by mere contentment of instincts or desires.

This is a point I would like to stand as I consider it crucial for morality and spirituality at the same time. This is also the point that perplexed Darwin and so many other philosophers that did not approach it through a metaphysical lens, when it clearly is essential to do so. Darwin failed to attribute to natural selection the following human trait as it goes directly in opposition with it, self-sacrifice practiced with free will.

Anthropologists have observed same traits of behavior in animals which only proves that the predisposition was always there and the psychological evolution of our mental faculties superseded the mere fraction of an instinctive action or reaction to a calculated, self-aware, free choice to sacrifice something or ourselves. And, the fact that humans, as reasonable beings, understand that they will perish with such a choice, their self-interest is not their drive, and thus they proceed with a choice that produces detrimental effects.

## Re-evaluation of morals

Professor Elizabeth Anscombe one of the greatest philosophers of the 20th century picked up the grounding problem of morality and by examining all pre-existing moral theories and identifying their weaknesses, she concluded that all were insufficient and if we were to create a new approach in how we view our values and morals as a theorem, we would have to start from the very depths of our cognition. Particularly, from the way we assign meaning and communicate; and from which phases this meaning had gone through, how it developed, how and why its value increased or decreased. In her paper for the Modern moral Philosophy in 1958 she wrote “The proof that an unjust act equals a bad act would require a positive account of justice as a “virtue”. This part of assigning matter on the subject or meaning on a characteristic or process is to be said after conceptual analysis. We need to identify what type of characteristic is virtue, assign meaning, value and examine the history of the word and its value. Examine how it related to the actions it is instanced. For that we need an account of what “action” is, what “human” is, what “human action” is. How its decision is affected by its motive and by its intention” (Anscombe, 1958).

On the basis of a universalized set of values that will form a common moral code for all humanity, aside cultural relativism, the United Nations in 1948 set the precedence for “a foundation of freedom, justice and freedom” for all humans and enacted the declaration of Human Rights. Partly because of the atrocities that took place during the Word War II and partly due to the pressing need for reform, this agreement between nations to agree the inclusion of civil and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights in their sovereign legal systems is of such ground-braking significance that shaped the rights of millions of peoples for the decades that followed. Of course, the declaration is of a non-binding character and member states are urged from the U.N. bodies to adopt the rights and apply them to their domestic policies.

Professor Anscombe witnessed a world where two world wars and a couple of atomic bombs destroyed morality in all forms. The founding of the U.N. was a beacon of hope that mankind wants to escape evil, an evil that starts from within us. But she warned that in order to achieve those goals, it is imperative that we all understand the same thing when we use the word ‘bad’ in all languages. “Deconstructing the process, removing layers and approaching the source of the process is what might enable us to put together a theory that might conclude a theorem of the basis of morality or even how we should/ought to conceive it order all humans to understand the same thing when we say a ‘bad action’ or a ‘good action’.” (Anscombe, 1958)

A handful of important contemporary philosophers such as Alasdair Macintyre, Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot and Martha Nussbaum were concerned that modern ethics and moral theories are caught up in a perpetual convergence between deontology and utilitarianism. Instead of placing the obligation as the primary moral concern, Nussbaum, like Foot, suggested that we should reprise the central question of virtue ethics 'what kind of lives should we live?' in order to redirect morality.

### Revival of Virtue Ethics

Aristotle's ethical thought was a cornerstone for the development of moral conduct. Where other moral theories would try to identify a fundamental moral law by introducing a primary principle (utility, duty, cooperation, divine lawgiver) and thus define virtue as a disposition to comply with, a virtue ethics theorist would explain human conduct by reference to actions that would serve as a typical example of virtue. Examples that would create raw material for repetitive practice in order to serve habituation and embed the virtuous traits to a character. Aristotle believed that via habituation we can acquire moral knowledge. As mentioned earlier, according to the Classical Philosopher's accord, virtue (arete) is a trait of mind character that enables us to attain a good life, a life in accordance with reason. He distinguishes two types of virtue- the moral virtue and the intellectual virtues. He recognizes the existence of the soul and believes that we are compiled by three elementary levels; the passions, the faculties and the states. Passions are bodily appetites, our emotions and any feeling resulting from pleasure or pain. Virtues cannot belong in this level due to three reasons: by having an appetite for food or feeling sad does not make someone a good or a bad person. We cannot choose our passions; our appetites are natural, and the emotions are born with mechanisms we cannot control. Virtues are related to the choices we make, so willingly we cannot choose how to feel or want/need (hunger, thirst). Virtues are not desires that actually motivate us to act. They also do not belong to the level of faculties, as are our senses, abilities to understand and feel things. Virtues are not part of our nature and we have to acquire them.

Finally, we have the level of states, where virtues seem to belong. These states can be states of mind or character. He defines the states of character as 'the things in virtue of which we stand well or badly with reference to the passions. (Aristotle, 2000) Character contains a person's traits and dispositions. It has a certain stability and longevity. It is a built-in collective system that is inseparable from a person's identity. Character traits last longer and are not easily changed than many 'states of mind', such as moods and desires. It reveals our temper and intent. Although



subject to change it is central to be the person one is. His famous doctrine of 'Golden Mean' is one of the most exciting theories and base for deeply rooted dogmas of religious constitutions. As he explains it to be virtuous is 'to feel passions at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way' (Aristotle, 2000). For Aristotle a fully virtuous action is the one which the agent knows what they are doing, chooses the act for its own sake and makes their choice from a solid decision out of strong character. Lastly, he concludes that the properly virtuous person will not find it difficult to do the right thing.

There is evident revival of virtue ethics over the past fifty years in the philosophical community. Most of it was inspired by reconsiderations of Aristotle's ethical thought and the prominent advocates for it were Elizabeth Anscombe and Alasdair Macintyre. Anscombe claimed that the pre-existing our time notions of morality are incoherent today, as they no longer make sense or are applicable. For her, following older doctrines that were perceived and construed according to the history up to the time they were developed and the then socio-political circumstances, is not only ill-advised but also harmful. Alasdair Macintyre agreed with Anscombe's views and continued this viewpoint further. According to his input, the modernized world can no longer accommodate old fashioned ideas and theorems that have been construed in specific times, after specific history and from specific people favoring previous theories, even advancing them. The concept of 'a good life' has significantly changed from the Aristotelian times. There are in the latest century many examples of conflicting moral priorities in full use by cultures and societies; Platonic perfectionism exhibits of behavior in our Olympic games and sports by awarding athletes and saluting, calculated risk assessments in our property rights as Lock would suggest, Utilitarian approaches in wars, Christian doctrines of morality for compassion and charity, just to mention a few. A mixture of pieces of all theories according to the what is in demand. But morality cannot be on demand. It needs to emerge from a constable and maintain a system that will be equally understood and willingly followed by rational human beings.

### A neo-Aristotelian Approach

Macintyre proposes a neo-Aristotelian account of human good that will ground and sustain a set of virtues. He stresses out the importance of answering the question 'What is the meaning of life?' in contemporary terms then we might be able to maintain a moral system that will be applicable to the modern man carrying the weight of the moral responsibility as it has been bequeathed from generation to generation. Starting from this question that is central in all moral theories ever developed. In an analysis offered by Greg Pence in a Peter Singer's book, he presents

Macintyre's analysis of a 'meaning of/for life'; "the meaning in life comes-as do the excellences which are the virtues and which sustain the prospering of rational societies- when a person belongs to a moral tradition which allows for a narrative order of a single life and which depends for its existence on standards of excellence in certain practices." (Pence, 1991)

The people who conform with this notion are those who can look in retrospect and see how their lives changed the world or made a difference in other people's lives. The concept of nobility is revived as Macintyre believes that leading contemporary virtuous lives is attached to noble choices. That entails our course in life professionally and socially; "only in certain kinds of societies, just as in only certain kind of jobs, can the virtues prosper" (Pence, 1991). It is true that there are some traditional values and principles that are associated with noble acts and preoccupations. For example, the professions that offer service like the sectors of military, medicine, education, government and artists. But the noble character of so many things that used to dictate a more distinct division between right and wrong are now obscure. To speak in modern realistic terms, even replaced. People can be replaced almost in every sector by a mechanical industrialized form of production. The affixed limitations of traditional sets of values have moved. We can call it globalization or progress, but every good effect of progress is combined with an equivalent amount of negative effect. We shouldn't forget that all in nature exist in pairs.

## To be continued

Although I have tried to describe and discuss where morality comes from, I have to admit that the difficulties one encounters in his attempt to explore the answers to these questions are often 'unbearable'. Anthropological and biological questions regarding the descent of man, remain mysteries. And the spiritual world's explanations also have their challenges. Science can help us indeed understand more and acquire some of the answers we seek.

I believe there is room for research on the topic of the transformation from animal to human and what enabled our mental faculties to expand in such a way for us to practice high levels of sympathy and self-reflection. Our moral intuition starts developing during and as we exit infancy, giving way for the first writing in our 'tabula rasa'. The mechanism of morality is so intensely built in us that we experience fully the feelings or results of good/bad thoughts and actions; pleasure, pain, disgust, guilt, fulfillment. There is perhaps a possible parallel state of the one that once was the origin that we can study; the passover from infancy to childhood. Time has a different significance when we are small children-infants. There are shorter periods of attention, interest,

needs and expressive feelings. Emotions and basic instincts (hunger, fatigue, familiar things, brightness, noise etc) are primary.

The way we understand everything around us forms our perceptions of life and the world. Which means that according to what we place value on and how we have to understand it, we think and act accordingly towards it. If we were to ground morality somewhere it should be there, in our perception. Perception forms our reality. What we believe shapes what we see. We may use our senses to acquire the information, but how it is processed relies entirely on what we will decide this information is. What defines our reality also defines our innate processing system.

Morality has no beginning, middle or end. If we concentrate solely on its source, its process or results we will not be able to conceive it fully. It is a spiral concept moving in a straight line through time, acquiring in the process properties and elements that assist its development. It is a living organism that evolves as we evolve, as our minds grow, and our bodies change. It adopts to the 'times' as it is a product of our cognitive nature. It is part of our inner visceral self, a compass embedded in our very essence. I consider it a matrix of values that is integrated in our mechanisms that configure our perceptive ability of ourselves and the world around us. Morality is for human existence what the meninge is for the brain. It sits like a membrane that covers, protects and feeds blood in the organ of our essence. Without our morality we lose that property that distinguishes us as humans, and we become animals.

## Concluding

Although with unclear origin, our moral behaviors today are based on the prototypes of all the aforementioned theories. They have elements of deontology, utilitarianism, virtue ethics, sociological aspects etc. I think what happens is, the way human life flows with encounters and developments, the same thing happens to morality. When I see someone in need and decide to help them it comes out of intuition and from my expectation that I will feel good afterwards. My initial thought was not a social expectation that drove my act of kindness, but subconsciously I did consider it and was added as a factor to proceed with my decision. Later I might consider what effect my act would have on others, knowing I have performed it or whether I took the decision to help, based only on the social expectation and possible feelings of guilt. So, I start reasoning about the decision I made. And reasoning is something we very often do. If I see an accident at the street I will try to help or call for help. If I feel consistent pain in my body I will consider going to the doctor. If I find my front door unlocked, I will assume something has happened and take

precaution. Even though we are predisposed biologically towards certain behaviors I do not believe that our sense of morality derives directly from our genetic code. I agree with Churchland that there might be a nervous system that acts as an 'influencer' towards our behaviors, but I find it hard to believe that it dictates them. What is the determining factor that we choose good over evil? Science is unable to inspect a motive as it inspects a natural phenomenon. It cannot perform an experiment on it and produce data.

If we consider our species without the technological advancements and comforts, we will see in our existence a creature very similar to our close relatives, chimpanzees and monkeys. They also kill for hunting, enjoy sex, strive for security and affection. Our psychological make-up remains that of a social primate. Charles Darwin was so perplexed with how morality fits in, in the animal-human continuum that he accepted in his 'Descent of Man', "any animal with well-developed social instincts would inevitably have the potential to form an advanced moral sense or conscience as soon as it could advance its intellect as man did" (Darwin C. , 1909, p. 100). But the fact remains that man was the only animal that advanced throughout history to such extent. We still do not know why.

The fact that we are prepared to sacrifice ourselves in the face of danger to save someone we love or someone we have never met is a tremendous proof of how deeply our perception is affected by the concept of ideals and moral exemplars. It is almost as if we crave for purpose that cannot be found in anything that is made out of atoms. I will agree with Professor Papanoutsos that as people, we still haven't found the right or proper way that will enable us to fully conceive the essence and the world itself. Through philosophy and authentic spirituality, we can manage to reach unprecedented heights in order to attain a vision of it. In his book *Ethiki* he mentions 'for what is the craving of the soul to its utmost existential utterances; to become one with the Maker, to be united with the beloved, to glimpse of what is forever' (Papanoutsos, 2010).

Beyond morality as the rule of the highest purposefulness and regulator of our current action, seems to be such a thing as a 'moral ideal' that produces a level of sacredness. It is preserved by tradition, even also by hereditary transmission and is evident in all human race. I believe this concept, this 'authority' is perhaps the answer to the origin and direction of morality.

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