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TOPIC 2

THERE ARE TWO THINGS WHICH FILL THE MIND WITH EVER NEW AND INCREASING ADMIRATION AND AWE... – THE STARRY SKY ABOVE ME AND THE MORAL LAW WITHIN ME. (IMMANUEL KANT, CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON)

WHY SHOULD I ADMIRE THE MORAL LAW?

PART I – WHY, TELL ME WHY...

KANT'S CLAIM THAT WE ARE OUGHT TO ADMIRE THE MORAL LAW WITHIN US JUST AS MUCH AS NATURE, "THE STARRY SKY ABOVE ME" IS A BIT MUCH. WE PERCEIVE EVERY DAY HOW PEOPLE DISREGARD THE MORAL LAW EVERYDAY, WE HAVE LEARNT TO DOUBT THAT ANY CLEAR MORAL LAW EXIST AND WE HAVE NOTICED HOW PAINFUL IT CAN BE TO ACCEPT IT. SO WHY SHOULD ANYONE ADMIRE SOMETHING THAT UNREALISTIC, UNSECURE AND PAINFUL. WHY SHOULD WE OBEY TO THE MORAL LAW ANYWAY?

OUR ADMIRATION OF THE STARRY SKY IS NOT TO BE DOUBTED. WE ARE RULED BY NATURAL LAWS, SO WE MUST ADMIRE NATURE. BUT OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE MORAL LAW IS DIFFERENT. ALTHOUGH IT IS, AT LEAST ACCORDING TO KANT JUST AS OBJECTIVE AND JUST AS STRICT AS THE LAWS OF NATURE, WE ARE FREE TO OBEY TO IT OR TO IGNORE IT. TO DESCRIBE THE MORAL LAW WE MUST SAY, THAT IT WOULD NOT EXIST, IF MAN'S WILL WAS DETERMINED, BECAUSE WITHOUT FREEDOM OF WILL THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY OF OBEYING TO A MORAL LAW. SO IT IS ONE OF THE ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE MORAL LAW THAT NO ONE IS FORCED TO OBEY TO IT. SO AGAIN WHY SHOULD I?

IT'S CLEAR THAT THIS QUESTION BASICALLY LEADS TO THE QUESTION "WHY BE MORAL?" KANT GAVE A DISTINGUISHED AND COMPLEX ANSWER ON THIS QUESTION WITH HIS IDEAS OF DUTY AND THE MORAL LAW. SUMMED UP QUICKLY HE ARGUED THAT MAN IS DETERMINED BY TWO DIFFERENT THINGS: HIS PERSONAL INCLINATIONS AND REASON. REASON IS CONSIDERED TO BE UNIVERSAL, OBJECTIVE AND MORE VALUABLE THAN THE PERSONAL INCLINATIONS, SO A WILL RULED BY REASON IS A GOOD WILL AND IT IS THE DUTY OF MAN TO ACT ACCORDING TO REASON. THIS LEADS TO THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE, WHICH IS THE OBJECTIVATION OF THE SUBJECTIVE MAXIMS AND DEMANDS THAT YOU MUST BE ABLE TO WANT THAT YOUR SUBJECTIVE MAXIMS IS AN UNIVERSAL LAW. ACCORDING TO KANT MAN SEES HIMSELF AS AN REASONABLE BEING AND FEELS THE DUTY INSIDE OF HIM OR HER TO TARNISH THE MORAL LAW. THIS STRONG FEELING OF OBLIGATION IS WHY WE ADMIRE THE MORAL LAW.

THIS GIVES US BOTH THE KNOWLEDGE HOW TO ACT MORALLY AND A REASON, WHY WE SHOULD ACT MORALLY. THIS ANSWER IS A GOOD ANSWER, BECAUSE IT IS UNIVERSAL, WHICH MEANS IT GIVES EVERYONE A REASON TO OBEY TO MORAL LAW IN ANY SITUATION. BUT IS THIS CONVINCING FOR SOMEONE WHO DOUBTS THAT THE MORAL LAW HAS TO BE ADMIRABLE AT ALL? FROM THIS POINT OF VIEW KANT'S IDEAS OF THE MORAL LAW AND DUTY SEEM TO BE AN OWN

GOAL, BECAUSE THE ADMIRATION OF THE MORAL LAW IS AN MORAL REASON TO BE MORAL AND THERE IS NO NON-MORAL REASON TO DO SO.

PART II - MISLEADING ANSWERS

IN HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY THERE HAVE BEEN MANY ANTEMPT TO JUSTIFY THAT SOMEONE HAS TO ACT MORAL: FIRST OF ALL THE IDEA OF GOD, WHO GIVES MORAL LAWS AND EVEN HAS GOT THE POWER TO PUNISH THOSE WHO DO NOT OBEY TO IT. BUT THIS CANNOT BE CONSIDERED TO BE AN APROPIATE ANSWER TODAY. FIRTSLY IT IS ONLY VALID FOR BELIEVERS, SO IT IS NOT UNIVERSIAL AND SECONDLY IT EXCLUDES REASON FROM MORAL, BECAUSE IT LETS MORALITY DEPEND ON GOD. SO THE COMMANDMEND NOT TO KILL WOULD BE JUST AS VALID AS THE COMMANDMEND THAT HOMOSEXUALITY IS WRONG. THIS IS, AS ANYONE CAN SEE, NOT REASONABLE AT ALL. BUT IF WE WANT REASON TO ENTER MORAL, GOD ISN`T AN APROPIATE ANSWER ANYMORE. WE CAN ONLY GUESS THAT GOD, IF WE INSIST IN HIS EXISTENCE AT ALL, WANT US TO DO WHAT WE HAVE CONSIDERED TO BE RIGHT BY REASON ANYWAY.

BESIDES THE RELIGIOUS ANSWER THERE IS THE ANCINET ANSWER THAT VIRTUTES ARE NECESSARY TO BE HAPPY. THIS IS PURE PATERNALISM. WE MUST ADMIT TO EVERYONE TO PURSUIT HIS HAPPINESS IS OWN WAY. FOR EXAMPLE JOHN STUART MILL MAKES DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN HAPPINESS AND CONTENT TO POINT OUT, THAT IT`S BETTER TO BE AN UNCONNTENT SOKRATES THAN AN CONTENT PIG. BUT THERE IS NO CONVINCING REASON TO DEFINE IN AN AUTHORITARIAN WAY, WHAT IS HAPPINESS. MILL SAYS, THAT OF TWO PLEASURES, THE PLEASUR WILL BE MORE VALUABLE, WHICH IS CONSIDERED TO BE MORE VALUABLE BY THE MAJORITY OF THOSE WHO KNOW BOTH OF THEM. BUT WHY SHOULD I ADOPT THE OPINION OF THE MAJORITY HERE, IF I DISAGREE? SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT THINK THAT HE GETS HAPPY BY OBEYING TO THE MORAL LAW, HAS NO REASON TO DO SO, IF THIS IS THE ONLY REASON.

WE HAVE SEEN ALREADY THAT THIS TWO REASONS ARE NO REASON TO ADMIRE THE MORAL LAW. THE CONTRATUALIST ANSWER IS BETTER. IT REGARDS THE FACT THAT A WORLD, IN WHICH EVERYONE OBEYS TO THE MORAL LAW IS BETTER FOR EVERYONE. THIS IS TRUE, BUT IT IS ONLY A REASON TO ADMIRE THE MORAL LAW AND NOT TO ADMIRE THE MORAL LAW WITHIN ME. THE EXISTENCE OF THE MORAL LAW IS GREAT FOR EVERYONE, BUT YOU CAN ENJOY ITS BENEFITS WITHOUT REGARDING IT IN YOUR OWN ACTIONS. OF COURSE THE CONTENT OF THE MORAL LAW, THE KATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE DEMANDS THE UNIVERSITY OF THE MORAL LAW. BUT IF ONE HUMAN BEING DECIDES TO EXCLUDE HIMSELF FROM THE MORAL LAW, HE WILL EXCLUDE HIMSELF ALSO FROM THE DEMAND OF UNIVERSALITY.

IN THIS CASE THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY LEFT TO CONVINC ANYONE TO ADMIRE THE MORAL LAW WITHIN HIM OR HER, TOO, BUT IT IS EVEN AT THE FIRST GLANCE INSUFFICIENT: HE OR SHE WHO DOES NOT REGARD THE MORAL LAW IN HIS OWN ACTIONS HAS TO FEAR SANCTIONS EITHER BY HOBBS` LEVIATHAN OR BY THE OTHER PEOPLE HE OR SHE MEETS. BUT THIS IS TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM ADMIRING THE MORAL LAW. FEARING SANCTIONS IS A REASON TO OBEY TO IT, WHICH MEANS PRETENDING TO ACCEPT THE MORAL LAW AND OBEYING TO IT FOR EGOIST REASONS. SURELY AVOIDING SANCTIONS IS AN EGOIST REASON.

THIS IS A PROBLEM WITH ALL ANSWER GIVEN ABOVE, EXEPT FOR KANT`S: PLEASING GOD, BEING HAPPY, ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF MORALITY ARE MOTIVATIONS DIFFERENT FROM THE MORAL LAW. SO THEY ARE POSSIBLE REASONS TO OBEY TO THE MORAL LAW, BUT NOT TO ADMIRE IT, BECAUSE WHAT IS ADMIRIED IS GOD, THE OWN HAPPINESS ETC.

PART III - AN UNSUFFICIENT ANSWER

THIS PROBLEM MENTIONED AT THE END OF PART TWO LEADS TO THE A DILEMMA: WE CAN DEMAND ADMIRATION OF THE MORAL LAW ON ONE HAND FOR MORAL REASONS, WHICH ARE ONLY EXEPTABLE FOR THOSE, WHO ADMIRE THE MORAL LAW ANYWAY AND THEREFORE ARE NOT CONVINCING. ON THE OTHER HAND WE DEMAND ADMIRATION OF THE MORAL LAW BY OTHER REASONS, WHICH IS CONTRADICTORY, BECAUSE IT SUBORDINATES THE MORAL LAW TO OTHER GOALS, WHERE IT SHOULD BE MORE VALUABLE, ONLY EQUAL TO THE STARRY SKY ABOVE ME. THAT IS WHY KANT CALLED THE ATTEMPT TO SHOW THAT HAPPINESS EQUALS MORALS THE EUTHANASIA OF MORALS.

IF SO, IS KANT'S ADMIRATION, WHICH SHOULD BE OBJECTIVE AND UNIVERSIAL, ONLY HIS PERSONAL OPINION WHICH CANNOT CONVINC ANYBODY? NO! KANT BELIEVES THAT ALL HUMANS BEINGS CAN BE REASONABLE. IF SO AND IF THE MORAL LAW IS REASONABLE, EVERYONE SHOULD BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THAT IT HAS TO BE ADMIRED, IF IT IS EXPLAINED TO HIM OR HER.

OF COURSE KANT HIMSELF TRIES IT. THE FIRST WAY TO EXPLAIN IS TO POINT OUT, THAT A HUMAN WILL, WHICH IS NOT SUBORDINATED TO THE MORAL LAW, IS SELF-CONTRADICTORY. WHY IS IT SELF-CONTRADICTORY? AS MENTIONED ABOVE, ACCORDING TO KANT HUMAN WILL IS NOT ONLY DETERMINED BY PERSONAL INCLINATIONS, BUT BY REASONS AND REASONS TELL MAN OBJECTIVELY TO OBEY TO THE MORAL LAW. SO IF AN REASON IS NOT SUBORDINATED TO THE MORAL LAW, THERE IS A CONTRADICTION BETWEEN THE SUBJECTIVE INCLINATION AND OBJECTIVE REASON. BY ADMIRING THE MORAL LAW AND REGARDING IT IN ALL DECISIONS ONE CAN AVOID SUCH CONTRADICTIONS.

KANT'S SECOND AND MORE IMPORTANT ARGUMENT IS THE IDEA OF AUTHONOMY. MEN DO NOT DECIDE WHAT THERE PERSONAL INCLINATIONS ARE, SO SOMEONE WHO IS RULED BY THOSE INCLINATIONS, IS NOT FREE. ON THE OTHER HAND SOMEONE WHO LIVES HIS LIFE ACCORDING TO THE MORAL LAW, LIVES HIS LIFE ACCORDING TO A LAW WHICH IS, ALTHOUGH IT IS OBJECTIVE, INSIDE OF HIM. HE HAS GIVEN HIMSELF HIS OWN LAW, WHICH IS AUTHONOMY.

STILL THERE IS NO ARCHEMEDIC PONIT IN IT, WHICH DEFINETLY FORCES EVERYONE TO ADMIRE THE MORAL LAW:

- WHY SHOULD I ADMIRE THE MORAL LAW?
- IT MAKES YOU REASONABLE AND FREE.
- WELL, I DON`T HAVE TO BE REASONABLE AND FREE.

PART IV – ATTEMPT OF A SUFFICIENT ANSWER

AT THIS POINT KANT NEEDS HELP OF A FRENCH PHILOSOPHER, WHO IS ACTUALLY A FAMOUS OTHONENT OF HIS ETHICS: JEAN PAUL SATRE. FROM THE IDEA THAT THERE IS NO GOD HE DEVELOPED HIS ATHEIST EXISTENZIALISM: NEITHER WHAT MAN IS NOR WHAT MAN SHOULD IS DETERMINED UNTIL MAN DERTERMINES IT. BY HIS ACTIONS EVERY INDIVIDUUM MAKES UP A SELF-IMAGE AND DETERMINES WHAT HE OR SHE IS AND SHOULD. BUT THIS SELFIMAGE ALSO SUGGESTS AN IMAGE OF MANKIND.

WE CAN SEE THAT THIS CLOSE TO THE KATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE, BUT DOES NOT CLAIM OBJECTIVITY. TO DEFEND THE MORAL LAW IT IS NECESSARY TO COMBINE KANT'S OBJECITIVITY WITH SATRE'S IDEA OF MAKING UP A SELF-IMAGE: TO SUGGEST AN IMAGE OF MANKIND BY A

SELF-IMAGE, WHICH IS MADE BY ACTIONS, WHOSE MAXIMES CANNOT BE UNIVERSIAL LAWS, JUST MAKES NO SENSE. WHAT IS UNREASONABLE AS AN UNIVERSIAL LAW; CAN NOT BE PART OF AN IMAGE OF MANKIND SUGGESTED BY A REASONABLE BEING. WE CAN CONCLUDE THAT MAKING UP A SELF-IMAGE AND AN IMAGE OF MANKIND IS AT LEAST PARTLY A REASONABLE AND OBJECTIVE PROCESS.

IF SOMEONE INSISTS IN DENYING TO ADMIRE THE UNIVERSIAL LAW, WE CAN NOT ONLY TELL HIM THAT IN THIS WAY HE IS NEITHER REASONABLE NOR FREE, BUT WE CAN SAY THAT HE CREATED AN INFERIOR IMAGE OF HIM-SELF. BY THE MORAL LAW MAN IS FREE. IF YOU DON'T ADMIRE IS, YOUR SELF-IMAGE IS THE IMAGE OF A SLAVE. BY THE MORAL LAW MAN IS AN END IN ITSELF AND HAS DIGNITY. IF YOU DON`T ADMIRE IT, YOU ARE A MEAN, WHICH CAN BE REPLACED BY OTHER MEANS. ONLY MASOCHISTS CAN WANT SUCH A SELF-IMAGE AND THIS SPECIAL CASE IS AN OBJECT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL REFLECTION RATHER THAN OF PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION.

ADMIRING THE MORAL LAW CREATES A DECENT SELF-IMAGE. BY ADMIRING THE MORAL LAW WITHIN ME, I AM NOT A MIDGET UNDER THE STARRY SKY, BUT A GIANT.