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## Ethics

### I. Nietzsche

Nietzsche is right when he says that Christianity is only for the weak. Man has evolved over centuries because of our natural drives and instincts. But Christianity wants to label these impulses as "evil" simply because these things are not permitted in their religion. Nietzsche thinks that Christian morals – which were founded by the weak – are a hindrance to the development of man and his "will to power".

He claims that the basic morals of Christianity, e.g., compassion, patience, non-violence, and so forth, are ultimately the results of power struggles. He specifically cites the birth of these ideals in the vengeful hearts of the Jewish priestly class. Because the Jewish priestly class and the Jewish people in general were weaker than their oppressors they developed a hatred toward all the ideals of the powerful ruling class, such as the importance of having athletic strength, being rich, being proud, and the importance of being strong willed. To quote Nietzsche:

One will already have guessed how easily the priestly manner of valuation can branch off from the knightly-aristocratic and then develop into its opposite; this process is especially given an impetus every time the priestly caste and the warrior caste confront each other jealously and are unable to agree on a price. The knightly-aristocratic value judgments have as their presuppositions a powerful physicality, a blossoming, rich, even overflowing health, together with that which is required for its preservation: war, adventure, the hunt, dance, athletic contests, and in general everything which includes strong, free, cheerful-hearted activity (Nietzsche 1035).

The priestly class, seeking "spiritual revenge", developed tenets in direct conflict with those of the ruling class in an attempt to destroy the power they held over them (Nietzsche 1035).

Nietzsche states:

When out of the vengeful cunning of the powerlessness the oppressed, downtrodden, violated say to themselves: "let us be different from the evil ones, namely good! And good is what everyone is who does not do violence, who injures no one, who doesn't attack, who doesn't retaliate, who leaves vengeance to God, who keeps himself concealed, as we do, who avoids all evil, and in general demands very little of life, like us, the patient, humble, righteous"—it means, when listened to coldly and without prejudice, actually nothing more than: "we weak ones are simply weak; it is good if we do nothing for which we are not strong enough" (Nietzsche 1041).

The Christian ideals are not grounded in human inclinations or in some philosophical ideal, but in vengeance. Good and evil are not some eternal forces, in this case, but creations of the weak. Nietzsche implies that man's spirit flourishes when he does his own will to achieve what he wants and needs. He states that man's purpose in life is to satisfy his "will to power," which is his will to life.

Nietzsche wants to separate this theory from the ideals of the Christian faith, which repress this trait – calling it evil – in support of its opposite: adaptation. Nietzsche believes that Christianity's adaptive characteristics, e.g., patience and submission, make them weak because they endorse a merely reactive stance to the forces of nature and mankind. Obviously, if you *merely* react to a nuclear assault or to an invading army, it is a huge weakness. Nietzsche says:

Under the pressure of that idiosyncrasy one instead places "adaptation" in the foreground, that is to say an activity of second rank, a mere reactivity; indeed life itself is defined as an ever more purposive inner adaptation to external circumstances (Herbert Spencer). In so doing, however, one mistakes the essence of life, its will to power; in so doing one overlooks the essential pre-eminence of the spontaneous, attacking, infringing, reinterpreting, reordering, and formative forces, upon whose effect the "adaptation" first follows; in so doing one denies the lordly role of the highest functionaries in the organism itself, in which the will of life appears active and form-giving ( Nietzsche 1055).

Christian morals hinder this "will to power" and deprive man the freedom to do as his natural drives command him. With this having been said, Nietzsche comes to the conclusion that the Christian religion is too weak to compete with the world from the fact that they hold universal laws that suppress man's natural inclinations to conquer others and to be in power.

Christianity promotes excessive compassion and unegoistic acts which weaken human beings' ability to flourish and their ability to be free from the adversities of other peoples' problems. To quote Nietzsche, "Egoism is not evil, because the idea of one's 'neighbor' – the expression is of Christian origin and does not correspond with truth – is very weak in us; and we feel almost as free of responsibility for him as we do plants and stones (Nietzsche 101).

Nietzsche is appealing to our own inclinations as grounds for truth. If we are to grow and prosper then we need to detach ourselves from the worries Christian ideals impose on us. The things that can make us strong – egoistic actions, self-preservation, and so forth – are exactly what Christianity opposes and calls evil.

Nietzsche also points to the Christian beliefs assigned to their specific God as a source of weakness. To Nietzsche, this God is different in comparison to the ancient Gods of Greece who were like "autocratic human beings" and displayed animal characteristics. To the Greeks, these deities helped them accept their animal side and were a catalyst in waving away "bad consciousness." He believes that the Christians, instead of accepting the ideals of these Gods, created contrary characteristics to endow "their" God. Because of this influence, our animal drives and our human need to flourish were sent into oblivion and replaced with the weak, anti-flourishing ideals deemed praiseworthy by "their" God (Nietzsche 1062).

He also finds fault with Christianity's belief in an after life and their belief that the kingdom of God will rescue them from injustice and evil. He states sarcastically,

-And what do they call that which serves them as comfort against all the suffering of life – their phantasmagoria of the anticipated future blessedness?

-"What? Did I hear right? They call that 'the last judgment,' the coming of their kingdom, of the 'kingdom of God'- meanwhile however, they live 'in faith,' 'in love.' 'in hope.'

-Enough! Enough! (Nietzsche 1042).

We can easily see from this passage how Christians, instead of rising up against suffering, torment and oppression would patiently wait through their ordeal in order to suck up the sweet sap of justice in the afterlife. The weakness in this case is not obvious because one could look at the Christian's ability to suffer and say, "He must be strong in order to persevere through such an ordeal."

But, Nietzsche would hear none of that! He would say that this person is weak in the sense that he is *letting* life control and shape him. These Christians, who instead of rising to the challenge and acting on the drive of their "will to power," put this aside in an attempt to reach the same "blessedness" that Jesus Christ preached about. To Nietzsche, this is an utter shame. These Christians are poisoning the natural drives of man with Jewish ideals that fooled even Jesus.

In conclusion, it is easy to see how we are weakened by the Christian religion. It suppresses our deepest drives to enrich our lives and pursue egoistic actions. It allows us to sit back and wait to be attacked or taken advantage of because it calls for us to be "patient" and "forgiving." It denies us our animalistic instincts, which tell us to survive, defend, infringe, and seek revenge. Christianity weakens people because it promotes a non-active, non-intrusive, non-retaliatory, adaptive lifestyle, which is grounded in the belief that "God will save us" or "God will give us justice." Christianity takes our staff of power from our own hands and gives it to

God. It strips us of our given attributes, inclinations, and instincts and replaces them with soft inhuman-like characteristics, which are hard to accept and even more difficult to practice.

## II. Mill and Kant

Let's suppose that there is a superior race of alien beings that are hovering above the planet earth in a gigantic flying saucer. Inside their ship is a super high-tech laser device that can kill all human beings on earth called the death ray. They communicate with the leader of Earth and demand, "Either the leader of Earth lets us torture an innocent girl, that we have hostage, for 2,000 years (this is possible through their life-extension abilities), and we spare the destruction of you on earth, or we destroy you humans on Earth and let this little innocent girl go free." The leader of the earth has two cabinet members who counsel him on what to do. One is Immanuel Kant and the other is John Stuart Mill.

John Stuart Mill would argue that it is right to torture the little girl so that the rest of the world may live in happiness. It would be obvious to him that the pains of this little girl, though emotionally moving, would not outweigh the pleasure of the great number of people on earth.

Mill states:

The ultimate end with reference to and for the sake of which all other things are desirable, is an existence exempt as far as possible from pain, and as rich as possible in enjoyments, both in point of quantity and quality. This, being, according to the utilitarian opinion, the end of human action, is necessarily also the standard of morality (Mill 940).

The leader of the earth may say, "But how did you come to this conclusion? Isn't this girl a human being? How can we selfishly choose to *torture* her?" Mill would say that the choice to torture the girl was calculated using hedon and anti-hedon units. Hedon units would assign a positive number to the quality and quantity of pleasure felt in a single person or a group of

people. Anti-hedon units would assign negative numbers to the pains of a person or persons. To select the right course of action, all we have to do is add up the hedon units of the world with the anti-hedon units of the little girl; when we do this the choice is obvious.

The leader calms down and begins to see the logic of Mill's method. But he still has doubts. The leader says, "How can we be so selfish? And why should we listen to our minds when part of our heart tells us *this is wrong?*" Mill would try to persuade Earth's leader that utilitarianism is grounded in our sympathy, not in selfishness. Mill would say that we do feel sadness and sympathy for the little girl in part of our heart, but we should not let that override our sympathy for the rest of the world. Because we have a natural feeling of sympathy for others, he would argue, we must try to save the most people we can. Mill would say:

The internal sanction of duty, whatever our standard of duty may be, is one and the same—a feeling in our own mind. This feeling, when disinterested, and connecting itself with the pure idea of duty, [...] is the essence of Conscience; though in that complex phenomenon as it actually exists, the simple fact is in general all encrusted over with collateral associations, derived from sympathy, from love, and still more from fear (Mill 949).

In particular, the reason why we should follow his utilitarian principle is because we would fear killing the rest of the world. When we think not only of ourselves, but others, we can follow these emotions with great certainty that they are indeed the "binding force" of utilitarianism. Mill would also argue that man is naturally drawn toward preserving the happiness of others.

Kant on the other hand would say that it is and always will be wrong to choose to torture an innocent child so that the rest of us can live a happy life. Torturing her would deny her the respect she deserves because she is a human being. Kant would say that we cannot treat her *merely* as a means to an end but we should treat her as an end in herself. From this vantage point,

insofar as she is an end, she has no quantitative or qualitative equal. In other words, she is priceless. To support my previous sentences Kant states, "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means"(Kant 855).

Another test to verify if torturing the girl would be the right thing to do is to see if its willing is a contradiction of conception. Obviously there would be no problem in willing that one person should die for the sake of others. But Kant would then ask: Is it a contradiction in willing? On this account it would be because everyone would say that they would not like their child to be tortured so others can live. In other words, they would not will such a law to be universalized because in doing so it would contradict their will.

The leader of Earth may be moved by Kant's theory, but he still responds, "But Kant, how can you not think of the happiness and pleasures of the whole world? Don't they count?" Kant would tell the world leader that his decision must be based on duty, not on pleasure or the inclinations of people. On the topic of pleasure and human feelings Kant says this,

Man feels within himself a powerful counterweight to all the commands of duty, which are presented to him by reason as being so pre-eminently worthy of respect; this counterweight consists of his needs and inclinations, whose total satisfaction is summed up under the name of happiness thereby are such laws corrupted in their very foundations and their whole dignity is destroyed something which even ordinary practical reason can not in the end call good (Kant 405).

What this says, essentially, is that a Millian account of what to do would in its very nature be corruptive to the call of duty. Kant thinks that it is this goal, of preserving our happiness, which helps a person to choose, if I may put it this way, the "dark-side of the force." To paraphrase, what Kant is saying here is that we should not let our own selfishness distract us from doing what is right.

Kant and Mill would both be heard and understood by the leader of the Earth. But which of them would be right? I do not know who to say is right, but I would most likely side with Mill's reasoning but choose to die because 2,000 years is a long time and a lot of pain for a little girl to go through. I guess I would not entirely rule out the authority of Kant's reasoning, but it does have some flaws.

Kant lacks a defense in cases where choices have to be made and both of those choices involve the suffering/murder of innocent people. Mill's reasoning, on the other hand, is what I think has the most weight because we can calculate the benefits of almost any situations. Its only flaw is that it does not consider human beings as having incalculable worth. In making my decision to sacrifice myself for the girl I have taken into account both theories and come up with my own reasoning. I reasoned the girl would suffer a very long time, whereas, I would not suffer but merely die. Thus, I conclude along Kantian lines, that it would be honorable for me to die for her, since no one would be using me as simply a means. Rather, my sacrifice would be done so on my own freewill.

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