

## Discussions about the Source and Universality of Moral Case

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### Abstract

The relevant meaning of moral has been constantly discussed topic in terms its sources and its universality. We have seen as the source of morality the Metaphysics in ancient times, Theology in the Middle Ages, and the information theory in new era. In modern times, we have different perspectives for the source of the formation of morality determined by good or bad reasons as a result depending on the individuals. Statements related to the source of moral and what forms the moral can be said in two words: one of them is human itself, and the other is the thought of existing love. On the other hand, it has been a subject for discussion if the moral is always valid, over the ages, objective and universal or something subjective that changes depending on individuals and also because of different societies. Therefore, who accepts moral as objective and universal, it is a propensity that comes from birth, but who thinks that moral is a subjective definition that changes lives depending on the society and during the period of time particular people live. In this study, we referred to the related debates about the issues and serious changes of technology and science which have brought to our lives but along with misuse of these facilities, such as the reality of violence against women, terrorism, human rights violations, But how about the meaning of moral, and its possible sources. If there is still a universal meaning of moral in this world that looks like now like a small village.

**Keywords:** Moral, Moral's source, Universality of moral.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### Definition of Ethics:

The definitons of the word 'ethics' or 'morality' can be difined in different ways. Almost all related branches of science have focused on their own definition of ethics. Philosophers, sociologists, theologians and all of them have suggested their own ideas on the issue of ethics.

Haçnerlioğlu describes ethics (moral values) as "the whole individual or social valid codes of conduct in a certain society, in a certain period of time and its social conscious state"<sup>1</sup>

Aydın, drawing attention to the inner psychological aspect of ethics, refers to moral values as the entire behaviors that form and direct one's manners, arise their beliefs, attitudes, habits, feelings, faculties and their results, and can describe people as good or bad. Whereas from the sociological perspective, from the perspective of relationships between people, ethics is defined as the whole principles and beliefs that adopt human communities over time, rules that regulate individuals' relations with each other and other people.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Haçnerlioğlu, Orhan. *Toplum Bilimleri Sözlüğü*, Remzikitabevi, 1993, İstanbul: ss 11.

<sup>2</sup> Aydın, Mehmet Zeki. *Ailede Ahlak Eğitimi*, Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi, 2003, Sivas: ss.125-128

Binbaşıoğlu emphasizes the connection between ethics and tradition referring to ethics in general as the ability to comply to morals of the environment or the entire rules related to it. When people obey these rules they make happy themselves and others as well. These rules with the time become a part of individual's personality and then "conscience" occurs.<sup>1</sup>

Gökberk states that the ethics of the ancient Greek philosopher Sokrates, is superior and its superiority is related to its connection with knowledge, only accurate knowledge will bring right action. According to Socrates, the essence of being ethical (moral) is knowing the good. His conception of ethics is social ethics. According to him, not only a single person, but society's happiness is important. Aristotle, like all Greek moralists, says that the ultimate purpose of all our efforts is happiness. The essence of the human is mind. Human can be happy only with the activity of mind.<sup>2</sup>

In general terms, remarkable points in the definitions of morality can be summarized as right knowledge, happiness, the ability to adhere to human customs, attitudes, beliefs, habits, social state of consciousness. What makes the subject of ethics so sensitive is the wide meaning and content it expresses.

On the other hand, while the definition aims to include human relations is made, this wide range has been tried to get explained by making a sensitive connection from knowledge to happiness and from there up to social rules.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Discussions Related to the Source of Ethics

In connection with the definition of Ethics there has been a discussion relating the point of its source. Because of being a human characteristic it shouldn't be forgotten that ethics is a part of life since the first human. Religious based explanations, as well as mind referring thoughts represent their common point human. Thus, whatever the source, morality is one of the indispensable facts of human life.

Türkçü, signifies the source of ethics to be metaphysics in ancient times, theology in the Middle Ages, whereas in the early modern age epistemology. According to the views based on knowledge ethics' source are as following:

a- According to empirical views, ethics is a result of the knowledge people gain through their sensory organs. It is a reality reached as a result of a kind of experience. Just as the way we get to the right information through our sense organs, the same way we reach the good, beautiful and true information given by objects.

b- According to relative view human element is essential. Because it is people who change the object. They want to protect and comply the rules.

c- According to the rational view, the concept of morality is categorically found in mind. Therefore, the mind is the source of everything. Mind is also the basis of experiments and observations we do through our sense organs.

d- According to intuitionist approach, the intuition power in humans is the factor which determines all their behaviour. Therefore, intuition in moral and ethical behavior form the result. oluşurlar.<sup>3</sup>

Öztürk states that there can be laid down three basic thesis as possible sources of ethics throughout the history of humanity. The first of this thesis is the thesis of religions which accept ethics as rules sent to prophets through revelation. Whereas the second thesis are theses of doctrines of philosophy that deal with ethics referring to mind and view it both a metaphysical as well as a practical human reality. While the third thesis are the anthropological and sociological theories developed over the social aspect of ethics.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Binbaşıoğlu, Cavit. *Eğitim Psikolojisi*, Kadioğlu matbaası, 8. basım, Ankara: 1992, ss. 186.

<sup>2</sup>Gökberk, Macit. *Felsefe Tarihi*, Remzi Kitabevi, İstanbul: 1996, ss. 50.

<sup>3</sup>Türkçü, Mustafa. *Ahlâkın Kaynağı Tartışmaları ve Ortaya Çıkan Ahlâk Telakkileri*, F. Ü. İlahiyat Fak. Der., Elazığ: 1968, Sayı 3/291-311.

<sup>4</sup>Öztürk, Osman. *Ahlak Olgusunun Kaynağı Nedir?*, Köprü Dergisi, İstanbul: 2006, Sayı 95.

Türgülü has made a different classification associated with the source of morality dividing moral conception into non-religious and religious.

1. Non – religious moral conception is the secular thought that doesn't include the idea of God and the Hereafter and do not take the authority and orders from religion.

2. Religious moral conception accepts religion as the power that shaes human's will. Being ethical means to submit to God's wishes and his Messenger.

Ceylan indicates that Kant views individuals as the main source of morality. Morality found within human nature originates from its own essence. This source, regardless of race and culture difference is the same in all human beings, because they have minds. Therefore, it is possible to find people with virtuous behavior and virtues in every society.<sup>1</sup>

Öztürk, implies that according to sociologists the source of ethics is society. According to sociologists and anthropologists people as a community, in order to live together on a regular basis, to communicate with each other, to be healthy and happy without any conflict, have had to develop some moral principles. Durkheim and Comte's ideas are important in this regard. According to Durkheim's example, moral behavior is a product of society. Morality first rises in society, but occurs in the form of individual behavior. According to Durkheim human is a moral creature; a non – moral community cannot be considered. The more the human socializes, the more ethical it gets.<sup>2</sup>

Because of the natural resemblance to each other in many issues, as a source of ethics, the number of religious views, represent a significant ratio. The fact that the first created human is a prophet and his life teachings for the world were directly received from God, strengthens the views. In this regard both the teachings revealed by the Prophet of Islam Hz.Muhammad and the Prophet of Christians Hz.Isa, as well as their life models can also be given as examples. On the other hand, the goal of religions to create the model human within every aspect of religion coinciding with the aim to form moral people, have a nature which supports the idea that religion can be the source of ethics.

According to Öztürk, the same way that divine power added the moral sense to human beings, he has also sent books and reorganized them, has informed them by reminding the forgotten things and sending book. So ethics are commands revealed through books and added to human nature by Allah to arrange people's both individual and social lives; they are His demands that show how people should behave.<sup>3</sup>

Whereas Aydın, expresses that he holds a different interpretation for Ficht's moral evidence of Kant and that God views acception of ethics as faith. Because accepting morality, doing the necessary things will glorify God and will make Him happy. The evidence of this is the voice we hear in our conscience.<sup>4</sup>

### Discussions Related Universal Ethics

After Modernism the spread of individualism thought, together with Postmodernism, has created a world where everyone has their own correct things. The same culture, the same society, people living in the same apartment have never been so separate, so much people of different worlds until theses days. It can be said that this situation as well as some benefits, has also brought some troubles. For Example; in a world where individuality gains importance identifying some thoughts, movement and case, bringing them to a form acceptable to everyone is a problem that is already taking place.

We can count the word morality as one of these. Inside individualistic conception of life in the modern world, making a common definition of morality, filling it with common values has become quite difficult.

The reason of this changing of what we call "ethics" and things found in its nature according to people and institutions, by making a definiton of morality according to almost every person and institution is the drawing of its frame. At this point, making a study related to ethics, measuring the moral level of people is becoming quite difficult.

<sup>1</sup>Ceylan, Yasin (2004), *Din ve Ahlak*, DoğuBati, Sayı:4, ss. 79-86.

<sup>2</sup>Öztürk, Osman. *Ahlak Olgusunun Kaynağı Nedir?*, Köprü Dergisi, İstanbul: 2006, Sayı 95.

<sup>3</sup>A.g.e.

<sup>4</sup>Aydın, Mehmet. *Tanrı-Ahlak İlişkisi*, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, Ankara: 1991, ss.4.

On the other hand, despite of many facilities of the modern era, it is a fact that it has brought also many problems. Society is giving serious exams and governments are facing difficulties towards serious problems that shook the community structure such as terrorism, violence against women, corruption, bribery etc. Considering these serious problems of our age, it can be said that the need of all mankind for compromised universal values is being increasingly more intensely felt. In order to overcome these problems humanity first must reach a compromise on common basis and this compromise must be converted to institutions functioning with justice. It is obvious that this is an unavoidable necessity. Otherwise, in a world where everyone has its own right, except the "right of the strong" it will be impossible to find an applicable policy.<sup>1</sup>

According to Apel, postmodernism representatives for example Jean Francois Lyotard and Michael Foucault, indicate that they believe that it isn't worth asking for a universal ethic and they are afraid that under the name of universalism there may be harmed individual differences of lifestyles.<sup>2</sup>

Yücel and Tezekici state that for those who don't consider morality as universal, human behavior is directed toward pleasure, that's why pleasure is good and pain is bad. As a result morality has become a phenomenon varying from person to person. On the other hand there are two groups who accept the universal law of moral. While some of them (Mill, Bergson) say that the thing that determines the universal moral law is subjectivity, the other part (Plato, Spinoza) implies that these elements are objective.<sup>3</sup>

Reboul views universality of moral in terms of values and implies that in their culture (ancient Greek) beside the universal acceptance of values there are also found those who do not consider them as universal. According to Reboul Sophistler are their leaders. While explaining the universality Reboul tells the story in Voltaire's article titled "Beautiful". "Ask a toad what the beauty is, it will tell you it's his female". Reboul, approaching the term universality from a different point draws attention to the relativity of universality:

"Indeed, if we say that our values are universal, we rightly are accused of ethnocentrism (see their culture superior to other cultures) and pressuring other cultures." Because by what right we will impose our own culture to other cultures? On the other hand, if we accept the relativity of our values, then our culture will not be able to take place among other cultures and will lose its legitimacy. "In this case do we have the right to teach our own children values which express nothing for others? In a sense isn't this a way to submit cultural arbitrariness?"<sup>4</sup>

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

As a result, whether the source is religion, world or anything else people give importance to, it is an unavoidable fact which must be accepted that values known as common by all living people on earth are moral understanding values. Perhaps the most fundamental point that will unite all mankind, a feeling, a thought related to what is good and what is bad is found somewhere in the depths of the human.

Building a beautiful world, leaving an immaculate world to generation, where people respect each other, a world where no injustice, evil, violations of human rights are found, are desires of the whole mankind as much as ours. People of science will surely continue discussing these issues on a scientific platform. On the other hand, in our world resembling a small village, the thing belonging to each individual is taking whatever is good and beautiful, what's important for the benefit of humanity and apply it to our lives, doing the things needed in order to provide our generation and doing them in the best way must be the most correct behavior.

<sup>1</sup>Arslan, Hulusi. *Ahlâkın Evrenselliği Açısından İslâm ve Modernizm*, İ. Ü. İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi, Güz 2010/ 1(2) ss. 41-60.

<sup>2</sup>Apel, Karl-Otto. *Bugün Evrensel Bir Etiğe Gerekçenim Duyuyor muyuz? Yoksa Bu [Etik] Yalnızca Avrupa Merkezli Bir Güç ideolojisi mi?* Çeviren: Taşkın KETENCİ. Universitas, An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Sciences and Humanites: 1993.

<sup>3</sup>Yücel, Fatih. Tezekici, Selman. *İktisat Disiplini ve Ahlak Felsefesinin Etikleşimi: Birliklilik ve Karşıtlık*, Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, Konya: 2007. Cilt 10, Sayı 1-2.

<sup>4</sup>Reboul, Oliver (1995). *Değerlerimiz evrensel midir?* (Çev. Hüseyin İzgar) Eğitim Yönetimi. Yıl: 1, Güz. Sayı: 3 (363-374).

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