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**THE AFRICAN UNDERSTANDING OF MORALITY IN RELATION TO KANT'S  
GOLDEN RULE PRINCIPLE**

**SUPERVISOR**

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**A LONG ESSAY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ECCLESIASTICAL DEGREE OF BACCALAUREATE IN  
PHILOSOPHY**

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### **STUDENT'S DECLARATION**

I undersigned, declare that this essay is my original work which has been achieved through my reading, scientific research methods, and critical thinking. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Baccalaureate in Philosophy.

It has never been submitted to any other College or University for academic credit. All sources used have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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This Long Essay has been submitted for Examination with my approval as the College Supervisor.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this my work to my Dear Mother, Jackline Mukalazi and my dear Dad, Boniface Mukalazi, my dear Brothers and Sisters, Rose, Christine, Eliud and Eddmond, to all my Camillian Brothers, and all my friends who have supported me during my Research.

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In a very special way, I would like to sincerely thank my Supervisor **Dr. Nyaga Anastasio** for journeying with me in my research, bearing with my shortcomings, to ensure that my work is well presented.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

CI- Categorical Imperative

HI- Hypothetical Imperative

ATS-African Traditional Societies

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

When we talk about morals, we deal with that which is considered to be right or wrong in human behavior. For example always tell the truth, have courage, keep your promises, treat others as you want them to treat you, all these represents a moral person, which are applicable to rational beings. This study is about digging deep into the African conception of Morality in relation to Kantian Moral teachings. The work is divided into four chapters: The first chapter deals with the general introduction, the second with Kantian Morality, the third with African Morality, and the fourth with how Kantian Morality can be interpreted in the African understanding of Morality.

Therefore in this first Chapter we are going to look at how Morality has been understood in the both contexts, for African Traditional Societies and The Kantian Morality, and how we can understand the centrality of Morality in African continent.

#### **1.2 Background of the Study**

Understanding morality is not only an aspect of reason as Kant puts it, but also experience helps us to be in position to live a moral life and this was what most African Societies applied for a harmonious living among the members of the Society. This also implied use of reason in order to judge what is right and wrong.

Every man beyond infancy possesses varied personal experiences with determined Religious, Educative, Social, Aesthetic, Psychological and moral depth. These phenomena verify



themselves and they are not discussed, their existence is indubitable. In the moral sphere they appear as experiences of consciousness, decisions, including definitive ones, valuations on good and evil expressed with judgments of value in which every man feels himself to be an attentive and objective judge, disdain for the actions of others, ethical intuitions which might seem as if they have taken place in a romance.

In this research, we shall critically analyze and harmonize the relationship between Kantian Morality and African Morality, and find out how they can help youths in the contemporary world live moral life. When we look at African morality, it was mainly aimed at instilling respect among members of the society and also bring in harmonious way of living. In Kantian Morality, he talks about Categorical Imperative which aims at encouraging people to act in such a way it will lead to a universal law, which also may promote unity and harmonious living in the society

The critique of Kant's categorical Imperative has a long history, beginning with Hegel. At least two interrelated objections can be delineated in this history. The first is that the formality of Categorical imperative renders it empty of substantive content, and that one cannot make a moral judgment in the absence of substantive content. A correlate criticism is that Kant posits rationality as the only source of justification of moral conduct, and that this unduly restricts the sources of warranted moral justification.<sup>1</sup> Early versions of these critiques were advanced by Hegel in his objection that categorical imperative operates only purely in formal terms, and because of this cannot plausibly give any content to morality.<sup>2</sup>

But the place of reason in moral foundations does not mean that reason alone determines the value of the good or good conduct, and it certainly cannot determine these a priori, as Kant is said

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<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Kant: Critique of Practical Reason* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 32-36

<sup>2</sup> Roger J. Sullivan, *An introduction to Kant's Ethics*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 43-47

to held. For Kant, a practical reason enjoins all rational beings to a law of duty which opposes all non-rational inclinations of consciousness: It is the function of reason, in fact, to expunge these elements.

Materialism offers a theory about the nature of reality, and its egalitarian inflection claims that man is equal in value. It is worth noting here, that Nkrumah out rightly rejects Hume's guillotine and its modern defense in contemporary African Philosophy by Philosophers like Metz who assert that "nothing moral, just, or otherwise prescriptive follows immediately from a simply metaphysical perspective, by which I mean one that is about the nature of reality and is free of evaluative and normative aspects."

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

Many philosophers have always disregarded Morality in African indigenous societies; they say that it is mostly based on Religious aspects and not rational. Apart from the confusion in scholarly debate regarding the exact meaning of the concept of morality in African Societies, there is also more far -reaching inadequacy of the terminology used. it may be easily assumed that the way in which all people know is similar and that they arrive at knowledge by means of correlating concepts or inferring in the same manner. <sup>3</sup>

The way in which indigenous people know what is morally right may not be the same as the way in which Western people know what is right. Therefore Kant a Western Philosopher despised African Morality as it was only based on the irrational minds and the backwardness of The Africans. But in this research we shall get to understand the acquisition of knowledge in African societies was based on cognition and most probably complemented by societal threats of repulsion or societal promises of reward.

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<sup>3</sup> Chinua Achebe, *African Philosophy, An Anthropology* (Oxford University , Blackwells, 1998), 69

When we talk of morality we also get to learn and understand that acquisition and construction of moral knowledge is also gained through experience. Therefore we cannot have morality in its fullness without the application of the rational mind as Kant would talk of the Africans.<sup>4</sup>

#### **1.4 Objectives of Study**

To discuss the centrality of Kantian Moral philosophy

To examine the overview of African Morality, and how they enhanced morals among its members

To show the relationships between Kantian Morality and African Morality

#### **1.5 Justification of the study**

This research attempts to throw light on and show how the fundamental similarities and differences between the African and Kantian ethical conceptions by examining the foundation of ethics and morality in the two systems, using the Golden rule principle in African ethics and Kant's categorical imperative in western ethics revolves round the "Golden Rule Principle" as the ultimate moral principle.

This principle states that "Do unto others what you want them to do unto you." This principle compares favorably with Immanuel Kant's whose main thrust is found in his "Categorical Imperative", with the injunction for us to "Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." The categorical Imperative becomes for Kant, the principle of universalizability,

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<sup>4</sup> Agrawal, M. M, *morals and the value of human life*, ( Oxford University , Blackwells, 1998), 146-154

which according to Kant, is categorical and must be equally binding on everyone. This idea of Kant, we argue, compares with the “Golden Rule Principle.”<sup>5</sup>

## **1.6 Scope and Limitations**

The research in this context is aimed at focusing only on Kantian Morality only in relation to African Morality neglecting Morality as put up by other philosophers and the other continents. These other continents and philosophers also take Morality as the centrality of their livelihood, and therefore in order to overcome these limitations next time we need to expand and look at the world in general.

## **1.7 Methodology**

In this research I will apply two main Research Methods and these are; Analytical method and Conceptual method

Analytical method, in this I will carry out survey and fact finding investigation of different kinds. This method is purposely in explaining of the set of circumstances as they are present as such, for example, when we talk about African Morality, we critically analyze how African societies uphold their moral standards.

Conceptual method, this method, it is much related to some abstract ideas or theory. It focuses on the concept theory that explain the concerned theory being studied. For example in my case study, talking about The Categorical Imperative of Kant, I will apply this methodology to be in position to bring about what Kant meant with this theory.

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<sup>5</sup> Godwin Azenabor University of Lagos, Akoka, Nigeria

## 1.8 Literature Review

Ubuntu Ethics needs to be given a better perspective in order to address new African identities that have been propagated by globalization and colonialism. It must be emphasized that Ubuntu Ethics is tethered towards black Africans from the Bantu ethnic group. These include among others, the Zulu, Ndebele and Xhosa of South Africa, The Baganda and Basoga of Uganda, the Shona of Zimbabwe, the Kamba, Luhya, and Kikuyu of Kenya, the chaga and Sukuma of Tanzania and the Hutu and Tusi of Rwanda and Burundi. Unlike the Ubuntu Ethics which promotes humanness without clearly dignifying it across the sex, gender, class and social status divide. The Ethics of Ubuntu-Bulamu not only explicitly situates African moral and political Philosophy on a Kantian deontological foundation but also harmonizes the communal and individual tenets of the human person.

According to this Ethic, all Africans are rational dignified individuals with a social obligation to promote and protect the freedoms and rights of all other Africans in Society. The abuse of this dictum leads to a violation of, oral law or conscience. The promotion and protection of the same also leads the fostering of human rights, social harmony, social cohesion and social sodality.’<sup>6</sup>

The moral good, being the end that human beings ought to pursue, cannot be defined without referring to what human beings, as ontological entities, actually are. According to my conception, human mind (or spirit or person) is a triadic entity made of intellect, sensitiveness, and power which, through their outward or selfish activity (directed to the external objects), produce ideas, sentiments, and actions, whereas through their inward or moral activity (directed to mind itself), produce moral thoughts, moral feelings, and moral acts, respectively. The moral acts perform the good deeds under the guidance of the moral norms, which arise from the convergence of moral

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<sup>6</sup>Kleingeld, Pauline, “*Kant’s Second Thoughts on Colonialism*,” in K. Flikschuh, & L. Ypi (eds.), *Kant and Colonialism: Historical and Critical Perspectives*. Oxford University Press, 2014

principles and moral values. The ground moral norm prescribes the promotion of mind evolution. The moral agent should help others until they reach the evolution allowing condition, that is, the condition that allows the helped person to develop his own mind, thus fulfilling his moral duty toward himself. The conception of the moral good as consisting of mind evolution allows us to give ethics an ontological basis.’<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Francesco Belfiore (Retired) University of Catania, Italy

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CENTRALITY OF KANTIAN MORAL PHILOSOPHY

#### 2.1 Introduction

In our first chapter we have looked at the over view of Morality in African Traditional societies and the Kantian Morality, and therefore in this second chapter we are to focus and look deep into Kantian Moral Theories and how he presents them. For instance Kant's analysis of the commonsense ideas begins with the thought that the only good without qualification is a "good will". While the phrases "he's a good hearted," "she's good hearted", and "she means well", are common.<sup>8</sup>

#### 2.2 Who is Immanuel Kant?

Immanuel Kant, born in Konisberg, Prussia, 1721, was the son of plain people. His paternal grandparents emigrated to Germany from the fatherland of Hume. After pursuing his studies at the University of his Native City, Kant became a private tutor, then a privatdocent in the University of Konigsberg, where he taught logic, ethics, metaphysics, mathematics, cosmography, and geography. He was made full professor in 1770, and continued with his lectures until 1797. In 1804 he died, rich in honors and in years. Kant never left his native province and never married.<sup>9</sup>

#### 2.3 Kant's Moral Thought

Moral philosophy today expresses a general lack of confidence in our culture's Enlightenment roots. We are told that we have lost our moral bearings, that the Enlightenment project has failed,

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<sup>8</sup> Allison, Henry, *Kant's Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4

<sup>9</sup> Alfred Weber. *History of Philosophy*. Trans. Frank Thilly. (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1908), 92

that reason itself has failed us, and that we must move on to a postmodern ethics, or turn back to some version of Aristotelian virtue. Within this context, moral philosophers have charged Kant's ethics with exemplifying all that is wrong with the Enlightenment and, above all, with failing to provide an account of character and its formation in moral and political life.

Scholarly interest in the notion of moral character and in character development has only recently enjoyed a renewal in the fields of psychology, philosophy of education, and moral philosophy. For Kant, character is a moral task definitive of our vocation as members of humanity. Morally speaking, character is the steadfast commitment to virtue that is realized through a resolute conduct of thought that is morally good in its form and that, in its exercise, entails both causal and reflective elements. Anthropologically speaking, it is the formative task of the specific rational being we are, that is, of the rational human being in relation to living nature

Aesthetically speaking, it is the task of producing, on the ground of freedom, the work of art of proper to us qua humanity.

Ontologically speaking, it is the achievement of the unity of the natural and moral orders in the individual, a unity that results in the concrete actualization of the moral law of the world. Only when all these dimensions are taken into consideration does one begin to have a complete account of Kant's conception of moral character. The deontological reading of his ethics has been seriously challenged, and Kantian ethics distinguished from Kant's own ethics. The primacy of practical reason has been generally acknowledged and it has been examined in relation to both Rousseau's influence and the question of the justification of reason.



It has been argued that practical rationality and the practice of moral judgment, not duty are central. A debate comparing Kant's "virtue ethics" and Aristotle's has ensued. The critique of Judgement has gained acceptance as an integral part of the critical philosophy.

Secondly, in the scholarly treatment of Kant's thought the emphasis that continues to be found in analytical moral philosophy on the formal principle of the moral law from an objective point, one that is informed by a Hegelian type of critique, has a long history.

Kant's sole aim in the "Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals" is in his own words: "to seek out and establish the supreme principle of morality. To this end he conducts two separate, though intimately related, 'analytic' or regressive arguments from propositions which, he assumes in each case, are entailed in the notion of morality itself. The first argument in the Groundworks, Kant argues from the notion of good will, as exemplified in a "dutiful will", to the formulation of that which alone must serve the will as its principle. I ought never to act in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law.<sup>10</sup> The second argument Kant proceeds from the notion of 'practical reason', and the associated notion of Categorical or moral obligation, to the formulation of essentially the same principle, which he calls "categorical imperative": According to this principle Kant argues that "Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law".

These two arguments, based as they are merely on the notion of what morality is, can not of themselves establish the objective validity of the principle of morality; they can at most lead only to a statement of what this principle must be if morality is something real. This in fact, is all that Kant presumes to do in his argument of the first two chapters.

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<sup>10</sup> Hill, Thomas and Zweig, Arnulf, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 75-78

Kant takes his starting point the notion of what he asserts, is the only thing that can be conceived as good in itself and without qualification; namely, the notion of “a good will”, a will which is inwardly good and whose goodness in no way depends on anything outside itself. This is a notion which Kant holds that which is already present in a sound natural understanding but, notwithstanding, it is not regarded as something which is derived from experience. For as he notes, it is quite impossible to give an instance, with absolute certainty, of any act which flows from a will that is good in itself, and it is perfectly possible that there is such a thing as a good will, Kant proceeds to distinguish two separate conditions under which such a will may be conceived to act, when:

As with what he later calls ‘holy will’ there is no impediment in the form ‘subjective limitations and obstacles’ and when accordingly the will acts freely and spontaneously from its own essential rational nature.

As with the human will, there are present subjective inclinations and desires which impede the free expression of rational will and therefore, the acts which issue from it are not spontaneous expression of rational will but are done from duty.

A holy will according to Kant, we may note, is a practical idea or type or ideal to which finite rational beings can only approximate indefinitely. It is a notion of a will which is ‘absolutely good’, a will which can only issue in good acts and from which such acts flow without impediment.

Kant says that “if reason solely by itself is not sufficient to determine the will; if the will is exposed also to subjective conditions which do not always harmonize with the objective ones, if, in a word, the will is not in itself completely in accord with reason, then actions which are

recognized to be objectively necessary are subjectively contingent, and the determining of such a will in accordance with objective law is necessitation.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Kant’s Argument to the Formulation of Imperatives**

Kant introduces the term “imperative” into his argument, Kant begins by drawing a distinction between what he calls; A command (reason) and An imperative

An imperative according to Kant is what he defines as “the formula of this command”

The conception of an objective principle as far as this principle is necessitating for a will is called a command, (of reason), and the formula of this command is called an imperative. Therefore Kant uses “imperative” in a sense which indicates that he means what we may call a ‘practical proposition’

All imperatives are expressed by an “ought”. By this they mark the relation of an objective law of reason to a will which is not necessarily determined by this law in virtue of its subjective constitution. Furthermore, Kant identifies an imperative with ‘a formula of the command of reason’ in a context that clearly indicates the sense of ‘practical proposition’. Imperatives are only formulae for expressing the relation of objective laws of willing to the subjective imperfection of the will of this or that rational being- for example, of the human will.

Kant also speaks of imperatives as themselves commanding and thus seemingly, to use the term as a synonym for commands themselves. All imperatives command either; hypothetically or categorically

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<sup>11</sup> Timmerman Jens, *Kant’s Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 80.

Kant's reference to 'hypothetical' and 'categorical' imperatives marks a crucial distinction for this theory. Hypothetical imperatives, Kant argues that 'declare a possible action to be practically necessary as a means to the attainment of something else that one wills.

Categorical Imperatives on the other hand, would be one which represented an action as objectively necessary in itself, apart from its relation to a further end.' The distinction between CI and HI which Kant has made emphasizes the essential difference what may be called the prudential as opposed to the moral use of the term 'ought'. For example an Imperative or practical proposition, of the form 'X' ought to do 'Y' can express either a prudential or a moral judgement, depending on the reason that are offered for X's doing Y. If judgement is supported by reference to a particular end, or the inclinations and desires that give rise to this end, the imperative is prudential or hypothetical.

On the other hand, the reason offered is simply that is 'seen' that Y ought to be done, quite irrespective of the agent's inclinations, then the practical proposition expresses a categorical imperative. At a superficial level, it may be thought that Kant is here simply drawing attention to the relatively straightforward linguistic point that there are two uses of the term 'ought' and following from this, that there are two kinds of imperatives in the sense of practical propositions: Hypothetical imperatives, which exhibit the form 'Do X if you wish Y' and categorical imperatives, which exhibit the form 'Do X'

### **2.3.1 Hypothetical imperative**

According to Kant, it is quiet impossible to know what ought to be done until the end of the act itself is postulated .Some objective principles are conditioned by a will for some end, that is to

say, they would necessarily be followed by a fully rational agent if he willed the end. These principles give rise now here to hypothetical imperatives in which we consider the general form “If I will this end, I ought to do such and such”.<sup>12</sup> With Hypothetical Imperatives, we act because we aim at something in return. For example when you give someone you give someone help with an intention of being praised and recognized by others and not because what you are doing is good in itself.

### **2.3.2 Categorical Imperatives**

In this sense according to Kant, one acts out of duty, not basing on the aspect of ‘if’ this I will do that, and therefore CI entails objective principles which are unconditioned: they would necessarily be followed by a rational agent but are not based on the previous willing of some further end. The CI may also be referred to as ‘apodictic’ which is necessary in the sense of being unconditioned and absolute. The CI are the unconditioned imperatives of morality, and the actions they enjoin are morally good-in other words they are good in themselves and not merely good as a means to some further end. For example when we talk about this CI, we consider like when someone decides to help someone for example you meet a sick person on the way and you give attention to him or her, by taking them to Hospital, not looking at what reward you will gain thereafter, then whatever you are doing is good in itself but not aiming at the end reward.

The various formulations of the categorical imperative present us with a perplexing problem. Kant explicitly states that there is only one CI, but from there he then presents three other formulations of it. When we consider this problem, are they simply paraphrases of the one CI, from different points of view, or is Kant formulating more than one CI?

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<sup>12</sup> Engstrom, Stephen, *The Concept of the Highest Good in Kant's Moral Philosophy*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 747-780

In response to this paradox, let us try to examine Kant's ethical debt to the stoic tradition. In the first part, Kant says, "A person who deliberates calmly, moderates his emotions and passions and exercises self-control, seems to have all the essential elements of good character." These qualities were highly praised by the ancient Philosophers whom he refers to were the Stoics, whose cardinal virtues included calm deliberation, moderation and self-control.

Kant in his section two tries to incorporate the principle of Cicero De Officiis into his a priori moral system. Such an application constitutes a brief "Metaphysics of Morals." Cicero sought a universal rule which would resolve the conflict between duty and interest. He discovered three, in fact and each is used by Kant as a basis for variation of the CI.

There is an obvious parallel between these rules and Kant's three formulations of the CI, given here below for comparison;

Always act on the maxim which you can will to become a universal law of nature.

Always act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or another, as an end, never merely as a means

Always act so that your will by its maxims can regard itself as making a universal law for a possible kingdom of ends (human beings).

Looking at these, while Kant does not mention Cicero's three principles, this interpretation permits us to take Kant at his word that there is only one CI, which he later gives what he calls the "general" formulation. This general formulation, serves as the direct or immediate ground for good will. The other formulations, while they are applied to moral situations in the same way, are related to the good will only indirectly. We might even think of them as illustrative variations of the one CI.

### **2.3.2.1 The first Variation: A Universal Law of Nature**

The first Variation of the Universal law of cause and effect constitutes the basis for what we call Nature, in the general sense of structure or form. Nature may be defined as the existence of things as they are governed by universal law, therefore we can express the imperative of duty in these words. “ALWAYS ACT ON A MAXIM WHICH YOU CAN WILL TO BECOME A UNIVERSAL LAW OF NATURE.”

According to Immanuel Kant, nature is just the system of existing things governed by laws which describe patterns of events. These laws have two main characteristics;

First, every law is universal, without exception; secondly, each law is consistent with all the others.

Nature does not work against itself. In this the nature which Cicero talks about is an ideal nature, a Nature working consistently with Divine Mind to accomplish Divine purposes.

Kant adopts his own way this idea in his own way of speaking, Always act on a maxim which you can will to become a universal law of Nature.

Kant describes four situations, each providing an example of a situation in which someone has a duty. These four examples are among the most famous in the history of Philosophy. Kant uses the four same situations to illustrate each of the three variations of the CI. These are; Perfect duty of self, perfect duty to others, Imperfect duty to self, imperfect duty to others.

And now what might be the difference between a perfect and an imperfect duty?

A perfect duty is negative, an absolute prohibition. It commands us always and everywhere to avoid the action being considered for example; committing suicide and making false promises.

An imperfect duty on the other hand, is positive, bidding us to do something, but not specifying the means to employ. The particular action depends upon many considerations of the situation for example; how much money the benevolent man has to give, or to whom he should give it.

### **2.3.2.2The second variation: Humanity as an End**

Every action has a purpose. We do not act unless we act for some end; without a purpose, direction, or point for acting, we simply do not act. We walk in order to get somewhere, to exercise, to carry something. Actions which are pointless or purposeless, are really not actions at all, but are more properly called re-actions, or bodily response to feeling. We always do something and aim at something. What we wish to accomplish is called our purpose in acting, our goal-or in Kant's vocabulary our end.

Some ends are immediate, others are long range and still others are ultimate. For example a Christian attends Sunday Worship or Mass with immediate end to Pray, his long range goal might be salvation of his soul and eternal bliss in heaven, while his ultimate purpose is to achieve a life of union with GOD. All these can act as his purpose for attending Sunday Mass and Worship.

In this once we achieve an immediate end we set up another immediate end under the guidance of a long- range end. As steps in the achievement of long-range ends, immediate ends are not ends in themselves, but are intermediate ends, that is, ends which are also means to further ends.

There are ends which a person seeks because they satisfy his personal desires or needs. These are called subjective or personal ends. On the other hand, there may be some end which everyone ought to seek. Such an end would be subjective since it would not depend on any desire to achieve it or need for it.



We think of the will as an ability to act self-determining according to the idea of certain laws. Only rational beings have this ability. That basis of self-determination which lies beyond the willing itself we call an end. If this basis comes from reason alone then the end so derived holds for all rational beings alike. On the other hand, that action which may produce such an end we call the means. The subjective urge of desire is the impulse to act, and the objective reason for willing to act we call the motive. Thus in this, we can distinguish between subjective ends which arise from desires, and objective ends which rest only on rational, and hence universally valid, motives. Rules for acting are formal if they have subjective ends based on particular desires.

### **2.3.2.3 The third variation: The Autonomous Will in a Possible Kingdom of Ends**

This variation incorporates two concepts: the autonomy of the will and the kingdom ends. Kant first develops the idea of the will as self-legislating (autonomous), and from this he constructs the concept of a kingdom of ends. He believes that each of these ideas can be related to one of the variations already presented. Given that he will elevates its maxims to the status of a universal law, it follows that the will is self-legislating; given that each rational nature is an end in itself, it follows that all rational wills together constitute a “kingdom of ends”

According to the first variation of the categorical imperative, the objective basis for all practical lawmaking lies in the rule and its form, universality, which lets us conceive the rule as a law, even a law of Nature. The purpose of an action provides a subjective basis only. The second variation shows us that any rational nature which seeks an end is end in itself. From these two variations we can deduce third practical law, for the will, a principle which is the ultimate foundation for harmonizing the will with universal practical reason. This principle is grounded in the idea that every rational being has a will which makes universal law.

Kant now combines two ideas, that of a rational being and that of a will which makes universal law, forms the first part of the third variation of the categorical imperative: “Always act as a being which makes universal law.”<sup>13</sup>

Kant summarizes his argument by linking the three variations to form a systematic trio of principles. He claims that the three varieties are all variations of the same law, with the only difference being the point of view.

These three ways of presenting the moral principle are all variations on the same law, and each one integrates the other two. While there is a distinction between them, it is one of subjective focus rather than objective responsibility. The goal was to bring an idea of reason closer to our sentiments by relating it more closely to direct perception.

### **2.3.3 How is Categorical Imperative Possible?**

Every rational being considers himself a member of the universe of thought because he is a thinking being, and he sees himself as an effective cause in that world of thought; he can think of himself as exercising volition. On the other hand, he is aware that he exists in the realm of sense experiences, where his acts appear to be merely occurrences in a causal sequence. We cannot answer how the will, as a causal agent in the world of thought, can produce these actions because we have no knowledge of that world; the world of sense impressions.

### **2.4 The concept of good will**

According to Emmanuel Kant, there is nothing in the world, or even outside of it, that can be considered as good without qualification, but good will. Considering intelligence with judgment and any other mental talents such as courage, resolution, and constancy of purpose as

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<sup>13</sup> Kant, *Critique of practical reason*, Trans. Lewis W. Beck

temperament qualities, they are without a doubt good and desirable in many ways; however, they can also be extremely bad and hurtful when the will is not good that has to make use of these natural gifts, and for this reason the term character is applied to its peculiar concepts.

This is also true of fortune's gifts, such as power, wealth, honour, and even health, and that complete well-being and contentment with one's situation known as 'happiness,' which inspire boldness and, as a result, often excessive boldness, unless a good will is present by which their influence on the mind.

Some attributes are even beneficial to this good will and make its duty considerably easier. Such attributes have no underlying unconditioned worth, but rather assume a good will, which limits the regard with which they are correctly held.

Kant used the concept of responsibility to build the foundation for an ethical law in his combined works. Kant began his ethical theory by claiming that the only unqualifiedly excellent virtue is good will. No other virtue has this rank since they can all be utilized to achieve immoral goals (for example, the virtue of loyalty is not good if one is loyal to an evil person). The good will is unusual in that it is always good and retains its moral value even when its moral aims are not realized. Kant saw good will as a single moral principle that freely chooses to employ the other virtues for moral purposes.

A good will, according to Kant, is a larger idea than a will that acts out of duty. A will that acts out of obligation is distinct from a will that overcomes obstacles in order to uphold moral law. A dutiful will is thus a subset of good will that manifests itself in difficult circumstances. Kant contends that only acts committed in the course of duty have moral worth. This is not to say that

acts performed simply to fulfill a duty are worthless (they deserve approval and encouragement), but that acts performed out of duty are held in higher regard.

Kant's definition of duty does not imply that people undertake their jobs grudgingly. Although obligation frequently constrains people and drives them to behave against their desires, it nonetheless stems from an agent's volition: they want to uphold the moral rule. Thus, when an agent acts out of obligation, it is because rational incentives are more important to them than opposing desires. Kant intended to move beyond the concept of morality as externally imposed duties to provide an ethics of autonomy, in which rational agents freely recognize the claims made by reason.

#### **2.4.1 The good will with other respects such as;**

##### **2.4.1.1 The good will and its results:**

Good will, according to Immanuel Kant, is not generated from the quality of the things that it creates. In this case, the conditioned goodness of its goods cannot be the source of the unconditioned goodness that can only be attributed to good will. Even if a good will is unable to produce the desired results due to some misfortune, it retains its own distinct goodness.

A good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes, but because of its suitability for achieving some desired goal. A good will is good just by being willing; it is good in and of itself. Even if, due to some unique disfavor of fate or a niggardly endowment of step-motherly nature, this will is utterly deficient in capacity to carry out its purposes, if even with the greatest effort it achieves nothing, and only good will remains. Even so, it would still sparkle like a jewel for its own sake as something with full intrinsic value.

Its usefulness or fruitfulness can neither increase nor decrease this worth. Its utility would be limited to allowing us to handle it better in our everyday interactions or to attract the attention of people who are not yet adequately knowledgeable, but not to recommending it to experts or determining its value

#### **2.4.1.2 The function of reason in good will**

The concept that a good will alone is unconditioned good is supported by ordinary moral consciousness. Indeed, this is the starting point for all of our usual moral judgements.

Every organ in organic life serves a purpose or performs a function to which it is well matched. This also applies to mental life, and in humans, reason is the organ that regulates action, just as instinct is the organ that controls action in animals.

This teaches us that the first duty of reason is to ensure an individual's happiness, while the second is to exhibit a will good in itself.

#### **2.4.1.3 The good will and duty**

Immanuel Kant defined good will as behaving for the sake of duty under human conditions, where we must contend with unruly impulses and wants. To comprehend human goodness, we must first analyze the concept of duty, for human goodness is most visible when it struggles against the difficulties placed in its path by uncontrolled impulses, but goodness as such does not consist in conquering obstacles.

### **2.4.2 Autonomy of the will**

The will's autonomy is the property of being a law in and of itself. As a result, the principle of autonomy is "Never choose except in such a way that the maxims of your choice are realized in the same volition."

## 2.5 Kant's Universalizability Theory

Act solely in line with that maxim that you can simultaneously want to become universal law.

Kant distinguishes a maxim as a "subjective principle of will" from a "objective principle or 'practical rule.'" While "the latter is valid for all rational beings and is a 'principle according to which they ought to act,'" a maxim "contains the practical rule which reason determines in accordance with the subject's conditions (often their ignorance or inclinations) and is thus the principle according to which the subject acts."

Maxims do not qualify as practical rules if, when universalized, they cause a conflict in conception or a contradiction in will. A conceptual contradiction occurs when a maxim is universalized and no longer makes sense, because the maxim "would necessarily destroy itself as soon as it was become a universal law."

For example, if the maxim 'It is legal to break promises' were universalized, no one would trust any promises made, rendering the concept of a promise worthless; the maxim would be self-contradictory because promises lose their value when they are universalized.

The maxim is not moral because universalizing it is logically impossible—we cannot conceive a world in which this maxim is universalized. When a maxim is universalized, it might produce a contradiction in the will. This does not imply a logical contradiction, but rather that universalizing the maxim results in a state of events that no reasonable being would want.

Kant maintained that morality is the objective law of reason: just as objective physical laws need physical acts (for example, apples fall down due to gravity), objective rational rules require rational actions. As a result, he argued that a completely rational entity must also be perfectly moral, because a perfectly rational being subjectively believes that doing what is rationally

necessary is necessary. Because people are not fully rational (they sometimes behave instinctively), Kant felt that humans must conform their subjective will to objective rational laws, which he referred to as conformity requirement.

Kant contended that objective law of reason is a priori, existing independently of rational being. Physical laws exist before physical creatures, while intellectual laws (morality) exist before rational beings. As a result, logical morality, according to Kant, is universal and cannot change depending on the circumstances.<sup>14</sup>

Some have suggested that the earliest formulation of the Categorical Imperative and the Golden Rule are comparable. Kant himself challenged the Golden Rule for being neither fully formal nor universally obligatory.

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<sup>14</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *Fundermental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, (Project Gutenberg, 1785), 35

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE UNDERSTANDING OF MORALITY IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL SOCIETY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

We discussed Kantian understandings of morality in the last chapter, and now we will discuss Morality in Traditional African Societies and how various people view Moral notions.

#### **3.2 Meaning of Morality in The African context**

The ethics of a society is embedded in the members' ideas and beliefs about what is right or wrong, what is a good or bad character; it is also embedded in the members' conceptions of satisfactory social relations and attitudes; and it is embedded in the forms or patterns of behavior that are considered by the members of the society to bring about social harmony and cooperative living, justice, and fairness. Moral thinkers articulate, evaluate, and interpret ideas and opinions regarding moral behavior.

As organized and functional human groups, African societies have surely created ethical frameworks, ethical norms, principles, and laws that guide social and moral behaviour. We would start by looking into African moral language, specifically the word for "ethics" in a few African languages. Such an investigation will provide some insight into the fundamental concept and understanding of ethics or morality. It has to be exact counterparts.

#### **3.3 Morality in African Societies**

The western powers have deprived the African continent of its position as the Mother of world Western powers have deposed the African continent as the Mother of World Civilization. They have persuaded the world that Africans are savages, primitives, and backward, that they sleep in trees, eat raw fruit, and associate with apes. Western anthropologists, philosophers, historians, and missionaries argue that most Africans are mentally inferior to White races and are incapable of engaging in logical and abstract thought, and therefore the West dismisses Africa's



contribution to the field of philosophy. [I.C. Onyewuenyi, *The African Origins of Greek Philosophy: An Exercise in Afrocentrism*, University Press, Nsukka, Nigeria, 1993], .21]

Morality can be defined as a public set of rules that all sensible people argue for and follow. It is concerned with people's behavior insofar as it impacts others and institutions. A rule system is not public if it is indifferent with how one's behavior affects other individuals who may be victims of such behavior. Thus, a public system is a system of conduct that is both known and understood by all those to whom it applies, and one that all people to whom it applies would not be illogical to embrace to guide their own behavior.

The rules of a game form a public system because they are understood and known by all those to whom they apply- The player. It is not irrational for all the players to adopt a rule, in order to guide their conduct by the binding rules and to accept judgements made on the basis of these rules and to accept judgements made on the basis of these rules.

The same thing applies to a community, which is an aggregate of individuals in social interactions. It follows that morality is the good at which every human action should aim. Action is an activity aimed at or patterned to morality just as the end of medicine is health, of strategy, victory. It is thought not to be irrational for any person to adopt to adopt morality as a guide for conduct. However, it may be argued that it is irrational, not immoral, not to adopt morality as a guide for one's own conduct provided that a moral objective is defended for the common good, in which case "a seeming irrationality" is transformed into a virtue applied to achieving a common good.

A belief is irrational if and only if it is held in the face of overwhelming evidence known to the person holding it. The person does not have to know that he knows things that contradict his

belief. To say of a belief that is irrational is to say something very strong about it, much stronger than the saying that his belief is mistaken. Many beliefs are mistaken and yet not of a kind to lead one to say that are irrational.<sup>15</sup>

### **3.4 The Igbo Moral World View**

Our underlying assumption is that African Epistemology is based on understanding the forces in nature, their interaction, hierarchy and cohesion.<sup>16</sup> The assumption can explain how and why morality cannot be expunged from the cosmology of an African Traditional Society. Scanning through the world view is necessary in appreciating the inner link between religious forces and morality. The view starts from some general features of the world around and posits that there could be a world with particular characteristics/ forces unless there was the ultimate reality. It assumes degrees of forces are evidence of purposiveness in nature which derive from and culminate in a Devine Designer from whom or where Purpose begins and ends. In other words, the world view attempts to present a conception that is persuasive and compatible with man's intuitive sense of the nature of the world and His place within it.<sup>17</sup>

### **3.5 Ways in which African Societies ensured Moral Values**

In African Traditional Society, various ways were used to bring about Morality and these include:

#### **3.5.1 The distribution Of Property**

In African Traditional Societies, there was no individual ownership of property, there was distributing property in such a way that expresses esteem for communal relationships. On

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<sup>15</sup> B. Gert, *Morality: A new Justification of the Moral Rules* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 21

<sup>16</sup> Metuh E.I. *God and Man in African Religion: A case study of the Igbo of Nigeria*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1981), 68-69

<sup>17</sup> Anyanwu K. C. "The notion of Chi (self) in Igbo Philosophy," (Nigeria journal of Philosophy 6:1-2, 1986), 105

implication of such a relational focus is much less of tolerance for economic inequality than what is typical in the west, for a sense of togetherness. Also the implication of Ubuntu focus on harmony is that membership in the community is, by and large, sufficient to be entrusted with an adequate portion of its land or other major kinds of wealth, supposing one continues to make good use of it.

### **3.5.2 Criminal Justice**

In African Traditional Societies, reconciliation, that is to say, the reparation of broken relationships, as the aim of criminal Justice is a major theme among friends of Ubuntu. Sometimes punishment is eschewed altogether in favor of apology and compensation, while at other times, when punishment is imposed, it is done with an eye to resolving conflict between the offender and his victims or between his family and the families of those whom he has wronged. Rather than intentionally create a climate of fear or impose harm merely for its own sake.

### **3.5.3 Medical Practice**

In African Traditional Societies individuals are understood to have weighty duties to aid others, particularly family members, it is not merely up to the individual what she does with her body and mind. Since the members of the community have a stake in the individual's health, many Africans would think that they ought to be aware of her illness and play a role in discussing how she ought to treat it.

### **3.5.4 Family Life**

Looking at the African Traditional Societies, an Afro-communitarian Morality will likely prescribe both getting married and having children in the first place, In Ubuntu spirit as articulated here entails that one has a basic duty to wed, and many African Societies believe in

such a duty. After all, seeking out community with others would seem to mean creating the most intimate forms of interaction one can with someone, with romantic love, or at least a personal relationship formed in the course of living with others. Furthermore, many African Societies believe that one has a basic duty to create Children. Again, if communal relationships are to be prized, then one has some moral obligation to make ones in which there is a robust sharing of life and caring for it.

### **3.5.5 Moral Education**

Moral Education in traditional African communities has typically been on the opposite pole. Moral Education among indigenous sub-Sahara societies has usually been parochial, focused exclusively on imparting the norms of the student's culture, and moral educators have often used fear and indoctrination to instill values, dissuading students from questioning the roles being handed down. In Ubuntu Spirit it entails that the goal of moral Education should be to develop the personhood of students, which means facilitating their capacity to prize community.

In African Traditional Societies, moral Education was highly appreciated and all the youths were entailed to learn the community values, in order to grow up into responsible people.

However, it does not follow that moral Education is simply a matter of ensuring students mimic the past.

### **3.5 Morality among the Luhya, Case Study Bukusu**

Bukusu belong to the larger Luhya Speaking Group of Western Kenya. The Bukusu speak Lubukusu, a distinct Luhya dialect, although they relate closely with other Luhya Groups in beliefs, practices, in a word, culture.

The Bukusu Morality, like most other African conception of morality, is articulated within the context of the community. This is to mean that morality is centered on the community rather than the individual. Hence individual welfare is measured in the wider context of societal welfare or well-being. John S. Mbiti in his seminal book *African Religions and Philosophy* has elaborated on this aspect of African identity aptly expressed in his famous dictum, “I am because we are.” Thus, in Bukusu perspective, moral uprightness denotes cultivation of traits of character, which enhance peace, order and harmony in the community. Morality aims at sustenance and promotion of ‘Kumulumbe’ this being the embodiment of the afore.

The moral rules are pursued because they reflect an essential part of human nature and their practical utility are recognized in the community and confirmed by human welfare. The emphasis on human welfare underscores the centrality of humanity in morality. Thus, we clearly see that Bukusu morality is essentially humanistic in outlook.

### **3.6 Moral Education and Religion**

According to John Mbiti, “Africans are notoriously religious”, Steve Biko also adds that “All people are agreed that Africans are deeply Religious race”. In other words Religion is concerned about morality, though morality is not necessarily concerned about religion. One can be moral without being religious. Morality is related to religion in the sense that the latter teaches people to be moral, since, as in Christianity, for example, morality has its rewards and immorality or sin has its penalties in heaven and hell, respectively, if not here on earth. But Steve Biko thought otherwise when he stated “It was the missionaries who confused our people with their new religion. By some strange logic, they argued that theirs was a scientific religion and ours was mere superstition in spite of the biological discrepancies so obvious in the basis of their religion. They further went on to preach a theology of the existence of hell, scaring our fathers and

mothers with stories about burning in eternal flames and gnashing of teeth and grinding of bone. This cold cruel religion was strange to us but our forefathers were sufficiently scared of the unknown impending anger to believe that it was worth a try.<sup>18</sup>

For Judith Boss, “Many people look to religion for moral guidance. The concept of God in the major world religions, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, is intimately connected with that of moral goodness. People Worship God, in part, because God represents perfect goodness. Worshiping reaffirms these moral values. This raises the question of the connection between religion and morality.”<sup>19</sup>

According to Thiroux, there are at least five grounds upon which to challenge the view that morality is based on religion; First, there is no conclusive proof of the existence of a supernatural being, Second, it is possible for non-believers to become moral, Thirdly, religion is not founded on any rational grounds that can serve as the basis of morality, Fourth, even if morality were to be founded on religion, would serve as a basis of morality, and the person who should make that decision. Fifth, the conflict among religious moralities cannot be resolved unless we transcend the religious moralities themselves.<sup>20</sup>

### **3.7 The Nature and Significance of Morality in African Traditional Society**

Descriptively, morality may be seen as a public system of rules that all rational persons advocate and adopt. It is concerned with the behavior of people in so far as that behavior affects others and institutions.<sup>21</sup> A system of rules is not public when it is unconcerned with how one’s behavior impacts on other people who may be victims of such behavior. Thus, a public system is a system

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<sup>18</sup> Coetzee, P.H and A.P.J. Roux eds. *Philosophy from Africa: A text with readings*. (Johannesburg: International Thomson Publishing Company, 1998), 29

<sup>19</sup> Boss, J. *Analyzing moral issues*. (Toronto: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1999), 17-19

<sup>20</sup> Thiroux, J. *Ethics: Theory and Practice*. (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1998), 31

<sup>21</sup> B. Gert, *Morality: A New Justification of the Moral Rules* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3

of conduct that is both known and understood by all those to whom it applies to adopt to govern their own behavior. There is a broad territory common to morality and law. Both are concerned to impose certain standards of conduct without which human society would hardly survive. In many of the fundamental standards, morality and law reinforce and supplement each other as part of the fabric of social life.<sup>22</sup>

If for the sake of security of life, law prohibits physical assault and stealing, moral codes, by recognizing that we ought generally to refrain from such acts, supplement the force of law. And the moral reprobation which such acts inspire is reinforced by sanctions imposed by the law.

Although Africa is incredibly diverse, many ethnic groups appear to share some moral values. Ethics is concentrated on a person's character in a variety of African cultures, thus expressing "he has no morals" translates as "he has no character." A person's character reflects the accumulation of their actions and habits of conduct; thus, it can change throughout a person's life. In some African cultures, "personhood" refers to an adult human who demonstrates moral virtues, whereas a person who behaves badly is not considered a person, even if he is considered a human.

While many traditional African civilizations are very religious, their faiths are not revealed, hence ethics is not based on divine instructions. Humanistic and utilitarian ethics, on the other hand, is concerned with promoting social functioning and human flourishing. On the other hand, social welfare is more than just the sum of individual well-being; there is a collective "social good" that embodies qualities that everyone desires, such as peace and stability. In general, African ethics is social or collectivist rather than individualistic and ideologically unified.

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<sup>22</sup> D. Lloyd, *The idea of law* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 56-60

Cooperation and altruism are regarded as essential. In contrast to most Western ethics, African ethics places a greater emphasis on duties of prosocial behaviour than on rights per se.

### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

It is obvious that African Morality laid a great emphasis on social conduct. Basic moral principles and practices in the form of taboos, guide people's action and help them to choose between right and wrong. For instance, Children in African Societies are taught basic principles of morality embedded in taboos. A system of taboos and sanctions held in honor of the ancestors, divinities and spirits are used in African societies to enforce morality; because they are agents of morality in traditional African thought.

In pre-colonial African society, and even in some contemporary African societies, taboos play significant role and served as moral commandments. They held in the maintenance of laws and order in the community and achieved such a paramount relevance due to the fact that, since African Traditional Religion has no written scripture. Based on oral traditions, taboos come in handy for the provision of moral law to escort the steps of person. These have been handed down from generation to generation, in different African societies through moral means.

In nut shell, the moral beliefs and principles of the African peoples are derived from their religion and that religion provides the necessary justification for moral values and beliefs. From the African viewpoint, moral principles are primarily concerned with the maintenance of good relationship with others.

Traditional African morality can be described in the following terms as communalistic; humanistic or anthropocentric; this-worldly; religious tabooed and ancestral. Virtues and taboos found in our society should be accepted applied to our day to day life experience, so that it



strengthens the values and moral beliefs which form the basis of social life. In general, African morality is determined by the injunctions of an ancestor and other extra human and superhuman power. A search for any meaningful attempt for African cultural heritage is the starting point of any meaningful attempt for African cultural liberation and development.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Appiah, K. A. *In my Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of culture* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1992), 87

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **KANTIAN MORALITY VERSUS AFRICAN MORALITY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

After dealing with the above chapters we now come to the ways in which Kantian Morality can be understood within the conception of morals in The Traditional African Societies, and the relationships between the two.

#### **4.2 The commonality between Kantian Morality and African Morality**

The study of earlier features of moral cognition is extremely important in Africa. Knowledge of morality, in addition to gratifying our historical curiosity, provides us with a comprehensive knowledge of the essence of morality. This is due to the expectation that people who have evolved a culture will have distinct epistemic or conceptual understanding of the core components of their culture, including their ethics. Morality is, in fact, a reality.

This means that morality is essential to all human being no matter where they live or no matter what kind of life they lead. Morality is what makes man a man. <sup>24</sup>

Despite this, many Westerners have an incorrect view of African morals. Some people even believe that Africans lack morality and moral consciousness. For example, they claimed that "Africans do not discern between good and evil, and they lack moral content or widely accepted ethical principles."

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<sup>24</sup> Aden H, Olira K (2017). *The conception Of Morality ian Indigenous African Culture* 57

### **4.3 The conception of Morality for Kant and African Societies**

The nature of principles and how people can learn, absorb, and use moral principles to influence their conduct, activity, or entire life style are fundamental themes in moral philosophy. Thus, morality is concerned with a norm that can guide human action. In Africa, morality can be defined simply as the synthesis of societal values, norms, and mores, as well as their authenticity in the community from which they emerge.

The conceptualization, adoption, contextualization, and examination of African values within the context of the African cultural experience is referred to as African ethics. African ethics can also be defined as the observance of principles for the harmonious adjustment of the individual's interests to those of society. It encompasses the complete range of human behavior that has evolved in our relationships with ourselves, other people, and the outside world.

According to Kwame Gyekye, African traditional ethics has two meanings: first, it refers to a set of social rules, values, and norms that guide people's behavior in a society, and second, it refers to the attitude and response to such norms and rules.

The foundation of morality for an African Golden rule principle is empathy that of Kant is in its categorical imperative dovetailing into the universalizability principle, reason, duty and good will. Although religion and the gods have their roles and place in African morality, man as a rational being also has a role to play in formulating patterns of behavior and moral principles to regulate human life and conduct.

The Kantian Golden Rule principle is responsible for some of the problems in our society because it is always nursing and fanning the prospects of immediate personal returns without consideration for any larger interests of the society or the world.<sup>25</sup>

#### **4.4 The Golden Rule Principle in an African Ethics and Kant's Categorical Imperative**

Both the above principle have suffered devastating criticisms. For Kant the decisive consideration is that one cannot consistently will the maxim of an action that is contrary to good morals to be universalized. To Kant, all moral concepts have their seat and origin wholly a priori in human pure reason.<sup>26</sup> Thus, to Kant, there is no giver of law or author of morality outside of man.

Since reason endows man with the capacity to be moral and law abiding, it follows that morality for man is self-imposed duty and this is what is meant by an "imperative". An imperative is a maxim, which states a universal principle of morality, intended to achieve justice, or what Kant dubbed the "universal Kingdom of ends". The willing of a maxim to become universal for the good of all is what Kant calls the principle of universalizability, which imposes.

The Golden rule principle is however different from Kant's principle of universalizability. The main difference between them is that whereas the Golden rule starts from the self and considers the consequences of the self-first the universalizability principle on the other hand, starts from the other and considers the consequences on other first before the self.

The justification of the religious assumption, which is the relegation of final judgment of moral actions to the gods, is one of acknowledgement of man's limitations to produce an objective,

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<sup>25</sup> Momoh C.S, *Philosophy of New Past and Old Future*, (Auchi: African Philosophy projects Publication,1995), 127-128

<sup>26</sup> Kant, I. *Ground work of Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. by H.J Paton, (London: Hutchison University Library, 1974), 710

adequate and reliable system of arriving at moral judgments. The traditional African seems to realize that no matter how much we try, we are limited by our natural ability as man and this makes it impossible for us to have a conclusive, objective knowledge of the intensions of a moral agent.

The best we could do, perhaps, is to allow he who has the power or the ability to know all the factors to pass the final judgments, after all human efforts have failed.

There is the ontological, religious and communal foundation of African ethics. The ontological Foundation revolves round the basic assumptions of African metaphysics and African morality is a derivative of African ontology- a wrong moral action is one, which offers and diminishes the set up and man's life force. African morality Temples tells us something demanded by the very nature of things. It is ontologically understood and has social dimension to it.<sup>27</sup>

Rather, what is moral is what promotes the well-being of the society by way of harmonization of interest and peaceful co-existence. The role of religion in morality in African ethics is that gods are only agents of moral sanctions rather than sources of morality. The gods are the last court the critical reflection on the manner, or nature of life, conduct, behavior and character of the African. African ethics is defined by K. Wiredu as the observance of rules for the harmonious adjustment of the interest of the individual to those of others in society.<sup>28</sup>

African ethics presupposes a regional ethics. Even though theories and ideas of universal character are propounded in ethics, they do not diverge from their prevailing cultural experience, the philosophical spirit of their age, challenges of the time, history, tradition and civilization that they find themselves. This is the basis then for the appellation "African ethics".

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<sup>27</sup> Temples, P. *Bantu Philosophy*, (Paris: Presence Africana, 1992), 67

<sup>28</sup> Wiredu K. *Custom and Morality*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, 1998), 210

#### **4.5 The Golden Rule Principle in an African Ethics and Kant's Universalizability Principle**

An African indigenous ethics revolves round the “Golden rule principle” as the ultimate moral principle. Bolaji Idowu in his book *Olodumar. God in Yoruba Religion* maintains that the Yorubas have a fundamental ethical principle and he identified this as Golden rule principle. This principle states as follows: “Do unto others what you want them to do unto you”. This principle dates back to the biblical days. JESUS CHRIST in 32 AD admonishes, “ All things whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do even unto the”. The principle is also similar to the Biblical injunction, “love your neighbor as thy self” and also as far back as 500BC, Confucius is credited with the view that: “Do unto another what you would have him do unto you and do not to another what you would not have him do unto you. Thou needs this law alone. It is the foundation of the rest.”<sup>29</sup>

Kant's position that there is no giver of law or author of morality outside of man has an existential relevance. Kant pays man's rationality a complement and develops the idea of moral autonomy, intended to debunk the theory of the Natural Law Doctrine that GOD or the superhuman or the spiritual is the originator of morality. It is from this Kantian doctrine of “moral autonomy”, according to Popper that Sartre developed his theory of “absolute atheism” in his existential ethics.<sup>30</sup>

But the, by his doctrine of “noumena”, Kant is aware that total justice is not achievable here on earth, as much as allowance should be made for virtuous who could not obtain justice in this life to do so in the hereafter. This is also the basis of the African appeal to the Gods and the theory of reincarnation, as hoped for redress. This is precisely why Wiredu observed that Kant

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<sup>29</sup> Ilawole O. J. *The Golden Rule Principle in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and Orumila's Ifa Morality*, (University of Lagos, PhD Thesis, 2006), 50

<sup>30</sup> Popper Karl, *Conjectures and Refutation: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 182-1183

universalizability theory is quite insufficient as the foundation of morals. If it were, the principle of non-contradiction would be the supreme law of morals, but it is not.<sup>31</sup>

#### **4.6 CONCLUSION**

Having looked at the morality of The African Traditional Society and Kantian Morality, specifically his Golden Rule Principle we come to learn that they have a close similarity especially doing to others what we ourselves wish to be done to us.

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<sup>31</sup> Wiredu K. *Custom and Morality*, 392

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