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# Contents

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	<b>Page No.</b>
1. <b>Upama Sarkar</b> <i>Understanding Other Minds: Contrasting Views of Dretske and Merleau-Ponty</i>	1-13
2. <b>Abhijit Tarafdar &amp; Barada Laxmi Panda</b> <i>Nature of Consciousness: A Comparative Study between Advaita Vedānta and Edmund Husserl</i>	14-24
3. <b>Venusa Tinyi</b> <i>G. H. von Wright and Sharad Deshpande on Forbearance: What has Occasion to Do with Forbearance ?</i>	25-40
4. <b>Rinki Jadwani</b> <i>The Role of Constatives and Performatives in Speech Acts</i>	41-52
5. <b>Suman Das</b> <i>Ethical Challenges in Research amidst the Rise of Artificial Intelligence</i>	53-64
6. <b>Sima Baruah</b> <i>Arjuna's Battle Abstention: Exploring the Motivations and Justifications</i>	65-75
7. <b>Prakash Mondal</b> <i>Kant on Universalizability: Some Observations</i>	76-88
8. <b>Mosaref Hossain</b> <i>Love and Friendship in the Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle</i>	89-105
9. <b>Tamashi Bhadra</b> <i>Unveiling the Dimensions of Care Ethics: A Theoretical Exploration of Nel Noddings' Philosophy and Its Criticism</i>	106-123
10. <b>Sunny Roy</b> <i>Patriarchy as a Root Cause of Gender Discrimination: A Feminist View</i>	124-137
11. <b>Suyasha Singh Isser</b> <i>Moral Worth of Rousseau's Women</i>	138-156





# Understanding Other Minds: Contrasting Views of Dretske and Merleau-Ponty

Upama Sarkar\*

## Abstract

Humans are uniquely good at understanding each other's thoughts and feelings because we are social beings. Philosophers of different traditions have traditionally addressed the problem of other minds. There are some solutions to knowing other minds and here I discuss briefly the view of Fred Dretske and Merleau-Ponty. In this article, I want to show the differences between the epistemological approach of Fred Dretske and the phenomenological perspective of Maurice Merleau-Ponty concerning the challenge of knowing other minds. One approach, explained by Fred Dretske, focuses on watching visible behaviors to guess what is going on in someone's mind. The other perspective, profounded by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, says that understanding others is more about feeling and sharing experiences. Dretske talks about challenges in knowing other minds and Merleau-Ponty looks at how our bodies play a big role in understanding people. This article includes the ideas of Dretske and Merleau-Ponty, discussing shared worlds, how we see others, and the differences in their views about knowing what is going on in someone else's mind.

**Keywords:** *epistemological approach; knowing other minds; behaviors; sharing experience; shared worlds*

## Introduction

Before discussing the view of Dretske and Merleau-Ponty I want to briefly discuss what is the problem of other minds. The problem of other minds is a philosophical challenge that arises when we try to understand

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whether other people have thoughts, feelings, and consciousness similar to our own. It starts with the idea that I can be sure that my own mind exists because I am the one who thinks and doubts. However, how can I be sure that other people have minds too? I can't experience their thoughts or feelings like my own. This links to solipsism, which is the idea that maybe only our own mind exists. The problem arises when we ask: if other minds do exist, do they think and feel the way I do? There are two main ideas for how we might know other minds exist: One is 'Perception' which means we might sense or experience other minds directly. The other is 'Inference' which says we don't actually perceive other minds, but we infer or guess that they exist. So many people believe that analogical argument is the best explanation for knowing other minds. The defenders of this view believe that we indirectly know other minds. We can only know our own mental states directly but we can't directly know other minds. Knowing something directly usually involves seeing or sensing it. Many philosophers don't think we can directly know what is going on in other people's minds.

Here I discuss about perceptual view of Dretske and Merleau-Ponty's point of view.

Dretske and Merleau-Ponty approach the issue of knowing other minds from different philosophical perspectives, and while there are similarities in their views because they both reject the inferential theory of other minds, there are notable differences in their views. Dretske is a representationalist and Merleau-Ponty is a phenomenologist but here I focus on the differences in the knowledge of other minds.

Dretske isn't concerned with addressing skepticism (Skepticism of other minds is the philosophical doubt that we can truly know whether other people have minds or conscious experiences like our own) or trying to prove that knowledge is immune to skeptical challenges. Instead, he focuses on explaining how we know what others are thinking and feeling. Typically, we assume that we can see what someone is thinking or feeling, but there is a common belief that the mind itself is invisible and private. We can observe behaviors like smiles or clenched fists, but we can't directly observe emotions like happiness or anger. Dretske agrees that we can't literally 'see' feelings,

but he argues that we can still perceive that someone is happy, angry, or sad based on their outward behaviors. He introduces a distinction i.e. between ‘non-epistemic seeing’<sup>1</sup> is simply perceiving things (like a clenched fist), while ‘epistemic seeing’ involves recognizing what those things mean (such as knowing someone is angry). I will discuss this in the next section. Here I discuss how he describe perception to know other minds.

On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty places a strong emphasis on the body and its role in perception. He argues that our bodily experiences and movements are crucial for understanding the intentions and emotions of others.

In this article, we will show the differences between these two intriguing perspectives. Dretske talks about challenges in knowing other minds through visible clues, while Merleau-Ponty emphasizes our bodies and shared experiences as the key to understanding what is in someone else’s mind. First I briefly discuss Fred Dretske’s view about other minds.

### **Fred Dretske’s view of Other Minds**

Dretske does not focus on dealing with doubts or uncertainties (skepticism) about what we know or how we know it. Instead, he is interested in explaining how we understand what other people are thinking and feeling. When we say that we can see or understand what someone else is thinking or feeling, there is a common belief that there is a problem that how we know about someone’s mind. Dretske thinks that this problem exists because people generally believe that someone’s thoughts and feelings are not directly observable – even though we can see physical expressions like a smile, a clenched fist, or a hunched shoulder, we can’t directly see what’s happening in their mind.<sup>2</sup>

He said, “Seeing that a person is afraid, however, is something that we can do without supposing that the fear itself is visible (we don’t have to see a person’s wealth to see that he is wealthy)...What we mean is that everyone could now see that he was angry, that he was angry became evident. What is evident (can be seen), however, is a fact (that he is angry), not a thing (his anger).”<sup>3</sup>

Although we can't see the emotion itself, Dretske argues that we can see that someone is happy, angry, or sad based on what we observe. For example, you might see a smile and know that the person is happy. He shows the differences between 'epistemic seeing'<sup>4</sup> and 'non-epistemic seeing.'

### **Non-epistemic Seeing**

This is just seeing an object or a person without necessarily gaining any knowledge. For instance, we see a smile, but we don't automatically know the person's emotion.

### **Epistemic Seeing**

This is like seeing that someone is angry based on their clenched fist.

Dretske is saying that even though we can't directly see someone's feelings like joy, anger, or sadness, you can still see evidence or signs that indicate their emotional state. He argues that epistemic seeing allows us to know what someone else is feeling or thinking just by observing them. So when we see someone smiling, we not only see the smile but also understand that they are happy. We don't need to guess or assume—they are showing their emotion through their behavior, and we directly understand it through our perception. This kind of seeing helps us to know other minds because we don't just see physical actions (like frowning or smiling)—we actually know what they mean. So, epistemic seeing gives us a direct way of understanding others' emotions and mental states without needing to prove it in any complicated way.

Dretske argues that you can see that someone is happy or angry even though you can't see the actual feeling itself. He gives examples like knowing someone is wealthy without seeing their wealth or realizing a metal rod is hot without seeing the heat. Similarly, we can perceive or understand someone's emotions without directly seeing those emotions.<sup>5</sup> Just like we can see that a metal rod is hot (even though you can't see the heat itself), we can see that someone is angry, even though you don't see the anger directly. Dretske compares this to understanding something based on clues or signs.



There is a difference between ‘seeing’ and ‘perceiving’. When we ‘see’ something, it means we physically observe it with our eyes. For example, we can see someone smile, frown, or raise their eyebrows. These are things that are directly visible to us. Perceiving goes beyond just seeing. It involves understanding or grasping something that might not be directly visible. For example, we can ‘perceive’ that someone is happy not because we literally see their happiness, but because we see their smile, body language, and overall behavior. Perception includes both sensory input and the meaning we assign to it based on experience and context. It is a deeper, more holistic understanding of what is happening.

We can perceive someone’s emotions without directly ‘seeing’ the emotion itself. Emotions like happiness, sadness, or anger aren’t visible like objects; we can’t ‘see’ happiness like a tree. However, we perceive emotions through physical cues like facial expressions, tone of voice, or body language. These signs help you perceive the person’s emotional state even though the emotion itself is not a physical object. Perceiving isn’t the same as an inference. We make a logical guess or assumption based on evidence when we infer. Perception is more immediate—it is how we naturally and directly experience things. Perception falls into the epistemic category of ‘direct knowledge’ or ‘immediate awareness’. It is not something we actively deduce but something we understand through our immediate experience of the world.

Dretske states that when we talk about seeing someone being angry, bored, or sad, we are not really talking about deeply understanding their mind. Instead, we are just recognizing that they are in a certain emotional state. It is like saying ‘I see Johnny is happy’ without really understanding what it means for Johnny to feel happy. Similarly, when we talk about physical objects, like noticing a torn page or wet ground, we are not learning something completely new about the physical world. We are just noticing specific details about those objects. He suggests that understanding others involves more than just what we can see; it also involves interpreting invisible aspects like emotions, thoughts, and intentions. Understanding is the ability to grasp the meaning or significance of something. It goes beyond simple observation. To understand something means we not only see or perceive it but also

know what it means in context and what implications it may have. For instance, understanding someone's anger means we not only recognize their angry expression but also comprehend the emotion and maybe even the reasons behind it.

He says that first, we know our thoughts and feelings directly, making it different for each person. Second, it mentions a common mistake in thinking that just because we see someone's behavior, we immediately know what is going on in their mind.

Dretske argued that we can directly understand what someone else is feeling or thinking just by observing them. For example, we can see if someone is in pain or angry even though we can't literally see what is happening in their mind. So, according to Dretske, we can have direct knowledge of other people's emotions through our perceptions, even though we can't directly see or prove that we are not the only conscious beings (solipsism is false).<sup>6</sup> So, Dretske is arguing that we can directly perceive other people's emotions, which shows that solipsism (the idea that we might be the only conscious beings) is false because we have real knowledge of other minds through what we see and experience.

Dretske's approach in this context emphasizes the direct perceptual knowledge of others' mental states, grounded in reliable perceptions of their behavior. He introduces the concept of 'epistemic seeing,' which involves perceiving not just physical objects but also having positive belief content about them.

### **Epistemic seeing**

Refers to direct knowledge we gain through perception. For example, when we see someone frown, Dretske argues that we don't infer that they are angry—we directly perceive the fact that they are angry. It is not just about seeing physical expressions; it is about perceiving the emotional state through reliable indicators. This view emphasizes that our perceptions can contain beliefs about mental states (e.g., anger or happiness), and this perception can be valid without the need for reasoning or inference.

Inferential knowledge is more like drawing a conclusion based on evidence or reasoning. For instance, if you see someone with a frown, you

might infer that they are angry based on past experiences where frowning is often associated with anger. So, epistemic seeing is direct and perceptual—no reasoning is required, whereas inferential knowledge is indirect, relying on reasoning and assumptions.

He argues that while we cannot directly perceive another's mental state like joy or anger, we can perceive the fact that they are experiencing these emotions. Dretske emphasizes the importance of a reliability condition in the analysis of epistemic seeing. This reliability condition ensures that the perceptual judgment of another's mental state is valid.

Now we discuss Merleau-Ponty's view about other minds.

### **Merleau-Ponty's notion of Embodied Mind**

When we meet someone, in the view of cartesian view we might think of them as having a physical body and a separate mind that we can't directly access. But some philosophers, like Merleau-Ponty, suggest a different way of looking at it. According to Merleau-Ponty, when we see someone, we don't just see a body and assume there is a mind somewhere inside it, but we immediately grasp them as an embodied mind. We understand their emotions, like happiness or sadness, by observing their facial and bodily expressions. He says that our emotions and thoughts are connected to our bodies. For example, if someone smiles, we immediately smile back without consciously thinking about it. Our bodies and gestures are crucial in how we communicate and understand others, even before we start thinking deeply about what is going on in their minds.

Now, Merleau-Ponty addresses a question: How do we know that others have minds like we do? He disagrees with the idea that we assume others have minds because they have bodies like ours or we can say that he rejects argument from analogy. Soren Overgaard in this context says, in his article "Other Minds Embodied", "... my mind 'has' a body – or better: *is* embodied – I am thereby in a position to *know* that the other bodies around me are similarly embodied minds."<sup>7</sup> He argues that we recognize others have minds because we all share the experience of having bodies. When we see someone else's body and how it moves, we realize that they, too,

have a mind because their body is similar to ours. So, it is the fact that we all have bodies that make it clear to us that others also have minds. He believes when we perceive someone's behavior, we don't just see his/her bodily movements, we are perceiving their embodied mind. The epistemological problem is about how we can know what someone else is thinking or feeling, and whether our beliefs about their thoughts and feelings are reasonable. Merleau-Ponty suggests that we can gain knowledge about other people's minds through our perception, meaning what we see and observe.<sup>8</sup> The mind, for him, is not something internal or hidden behind our observable behavior or separate entity that exists apart from the body. He said that he doesn't simply have a body but he said, "I am my Body."<sup>9</sup> So when we see a smile we not only see the movement of muscles in our face; we are directly perceiving the person's happiness. Thus, the embodied mind is directly perceivable because the mind is always expressed through the body.

Merleau-Ponty highlights that our understanding of others' thoughts and emotions is rooted in perception. For instance, observing someone looking at something or noticing their behavior, facial expressions, and hand movements allows us to infer their emotions like grief or anger. Merleau-Ponty argues that this perceptual knowledge is closely tied to the fact that we all have bodies. He contends that our ability to grasp others' emotions is possible because these emotions are intricately connected to our existence in the world, inseparable from our bodies and consciousness. In essence, our bodies play a crucial role in how we perceive and comprehend the emotions and mental states of others. He does not suggest that there is no mind beyond observable behavior. Instead, he insists that the mind is always embodied. Emotions, for Merleau-Ponty, are not identical to bodily behavior, but they are inseparable from it. The body expresses the mind, and the mind manifests through the body.

"For Merleau - Ponty , we see mind directly in action. As fundamentally embodied and animate beings , we are open and responsive to our environment ; this open ness is constitutive of our bodily being - in - the - world."<sup>10</sup> Merleau-Ponty believes that our minds are not hidden inside our heads; instead, they are evident in how we interact with the world. As living beings with bodies, we are connected and responsive to our surroundings.

He said, "I perceive the other's grief or anger in his behavior, on his face and in his hands, without any borrowing from an "inner" experience of suffering or of anger and because grief and anger are variations of being in the world, undivided between body and consciousness, which settle upon the other's behavior and are visible in his phenomenal body."<sup>11</sup> The 'phenomenal body' is Merleau-Ponty's idea that our body is not just a physical object, like a machine, but is a living, experiencing body that shapes how we perceive and interact with the world.

Some philosophers argue that Merleau-Ponty's thought about other minds promote crude Behaviorism. But he never reduced our mental states to our behavioral expressions.

For Merleau-Ponty, "minds - including emotions - are hybrid entities. They are constituted by both internal (neural, physiological, phenomenal) and external (behavioral, expressive) parts and processes, integrated into a unified whole."<sup>12</sup>

He is not a behaviorist because he does not reduce the mind to bodily behavior alone. Behaviorism argues that mental states are nothing more than observable behaviors. In contrast, Merleau-Ponty acknowledges that emotions and mental states are more than just behaviors, yet they cannot be understood without the body. So, while behavior is crucial for expressing the mind, the mind is not identical to the behavior itself. The mind and body work together as an integrated whole.

He rejected the idea that we infer the mental states of others solely based on external behavior and as a phenomenologist, he emphasizes the embodied and intersubjective nature of our understanding of other minds. He rejected the traditional Cartesian view that knowledge of other minds is indirect and mediated through inference. Instead, he proposed a more direct and embodied approach to understanding the minds of others. He argued that our perception of the world and of other people is fundamentally intertwined with our bodily experiences.

So we see Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach emphasizes the embodied nature of perception. He argues that our perception of the world and others is fundamentally rooted in our embodied experiences,

rejecting Cartesian dualism that separates mind and body. His approach emphasizes that our perception of the world is always through our embodied experience. Our body isn't just a tool for perception; it is part of how we perceive everything. When we interact with the world, we do so through our living bodies, and this experience shapes how we understand reality.

So, while Dretske's approach focuses on the reliability of perceptual judgments and direct knowledge of others' mental states, Merleau-Ponty's perspective emphasizes the embodied nature of perception and the mutual interdependence inherent in human relationships.

### **Dretske's Reliable Perception and Merleau-Ponty's Embodied Experience on Perceiving Other Minds**

Both Dretske and Merleau-Ponty emphasize that we can understand or perceive others' emotions and mental states through their external behaviors and expressions, even though we cannot directly see their inner feelings or thoughts. For Dretske, we perceive the fact that someone is experiencing emotions like joy or anger through reliable signs such as facial expressions or gestures. Similarly, Merleau-Ponty argues that emotions and mental states are directly expressed through the body, and we perceive them as an integral part of the person's embodied existence, without needing to infer them from separate mental or physical observations. Both philosophers highlight that understanding others is rooted in perceiving their embodied expressions, not just in making inferences about their hidden inner states.

They both address how we understand other minds, but they do so from very different perspectives.

Dretske argues that while we can't see emotions directly (like anger, joy, or sadness), we can still perceive them based on observable signs—like a smile, a clenched fist, or a hunched posture. He makes a distinction between seeing and perceiving. Seeing is just noticing physical behaviors, whereas perceiving involves a deeper understanding, where we recognize an emotion behind these behaviors. Dretske introduces the concept of 'epistemic seeing,' which is more than just seeing an object; it's about seeing that something is

the case. For example, seeing that someone is angry based on their behavior. He argues that this perception of emotions must be reliable—our perception should be trustworthy enough that we wouldn't perceive someone as angry unless they actually are. Dretske believes that we can have direct perceptual knowledge of another's emotions. Although we can't see emotions like we see objects, our perception of them through physical cues gives us direct access to their emotional states.

In contrast, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the embodiment of mind and perception. For him, emotions are not something hidden inside the mind, separate from the body. He rejects the Cartesian separation between mind and body. Instead, when we observe others, we grasp their emotions directly through their bodily expressions. Merleau-Ponty argues that because we are embodied beings, we immediately understand others' emotions as embodied too. We don't infer that someone has emotions from their behaviors; rather, we perceive their emotions directly because our minds are always expressed through our bodies. He believes that understanding another person's emotions is not a process of inference or reasoning but a direct experience through our shared bodily existence. The body and mind are integrated, so when we see someone smile, we don't just see a movement of muscles but perceive the emotion behind it.

## **Conclusion**

The problem of other minds is a philosophical challenge that arises when trying to determine if other people have thoughts and feelings similar to our own. Since we can only directly experience our own minds, it is difficult to be certain about the existence of other minds. Some believe in an analogical argument, suggesting indirect knowledge of other minds. Fred Dretske and Merleau-Ponty approach the problem differently. Fred Dretske addressed the problem of other minds within the framework of the philosophy of perception. Dretske argued that we can have knowledge of other minds through perception. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a phenomenologist, approached the question of other minds from a different angle. Merleau-Ponty focused on the embodied nature of perception and the intertwining of subject and object. They reject the inferential theory of other minds, emphasizing the

limitations and complexities involved in this endeavor. Additionally, both philosophers acknowledge the role of observable behaviors in gaining insight into others' mental states. The dissimilarity in their views are, Dretske sees the body as providing signs or clues about emotions that we then interpret to understand what someone is feeling. In contrast, Merleau-Ponty views the body as the direct manifestation of the mind—emotions are not merely indicated by the body but are expressed through it in an inseparable way. Dretske focuses on reliable perception—he sees our understanding of others' minds as a perceptual judgment based on observable behavior, which must be reliable to be valid. But Merleau-Ponty suggests that the perception of other minds is embodied and immediate. We don't need to rely on inference or judgment; our perception of others is directly tied to our shared experience as embodied beings.

Dretske emphasizes reliable perception based on observable behaviors, arguing that we can perceive emotions even though we can't directly see them. Merleau-Ponty, in contrast, argues for a more holistic, embodied view—we perceive emotions and minds directly through our bodily engagement with the world. While Dretske's view requires a step of recognizing signs and forming perceptual judgments, Merleau-Ponty believes that emotions are inseparably tied to the body and thus directly perceivable.

So here we see that Dretske's approach to other minds influenced by epistemology, involves a subject-object relationship where knowledge of other minds is mediated through observable behaviors, creating a possible gap between the perceiver and the perceived. Merleau-Ponty challenges the subject-object duality and proposes a more interconnected relationship between the perceiving subject and the perceived object, including other minds. The emphasis is on lived experience and participation rather than detached observation.

## Notes & References

<sup>1</sup>Dretske, F. (1969). *Seeing and knowing*, 4.

<sup>2</sup>Dretske, F. (1973). Perception and Other Minds, *Noûs*, 7(1) 36.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, 37.



<sup>4</sup>Dretske, F. (1969). *Seeing and knowing*, 78.

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<sup>7</sup>Overgaard, S. (2016). Other Minds Embodied. *Continental Philosophy Review*, 50(1), 65–80, 8.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, 12.

<sup>9</sup>Merleau-Ponty, M. (2005). *Phenomenology of Perception* (C. Smith, Trans.), 205.

<sup>10</sup>Merleau-Ponty, M. (1963). *The Structure of Behavior*. (Transl. by A. L. Fisher), 183.

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# **Nature of Consciousness: A Comparative Study between Advaita Vedānta and Edmund Husserl**

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**Barada Laxmi Panda\*\***

## **Abstract**

Consciousness is such a fundamental notion that it is very much difficult to define in words. There are certain entities like consciousness, space, time which cannot be defined in language rather these are the subject of realization but we are very much familiar with such notions. Investigation in the nature of consciousness has been getting significant attention for several decades and the analysis emerged in one tradition can be examined in the light of another. The concept of consciousness is considered as non intentional by Śamkara in ancient Indian philosophy whereas modern western philosopher like Husserl considered it as intentional. For Husserl, when we talk about conscious about something it actually indicates something; so according to Husserl, consciousness is always about something. They both accept the notion of pure consciousness as fundamental ground in terms of acquiring true knowledge. In this short research paper, we will try to analyze Śamkara's account of pure or non- intentional consciousness in contrast with the Husserl's phenomenological account of intentional consciousness. This paper will try to explore the parallel concept of consciousness in the transcendental philosophy of Advaita Vedānta and Husserl while identifying important differences between their understandings of the nature of pure consciousness and a significant emphasize will be given on the issue that consciousness is the criteria for acquiring any valid knowledge.

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**Keywords:** *pure consciousness; transcendental ego; self; empirical ego; phenomenology*

## **Introduction**

Investigation to find out the true nature of consciousness has been going on in both science and philosophy, so it is a multidisciplinary study. Here, in this research paper we will be limited our discussion in the study of consciousness in the light of Advaita Vedānta and western phenomenological perspective. In this context, we can quote the observation of J. N. Mohanty who is a pioneer in searching the phenomenological attitude in Indian philosophy. He observes, “It has been unfortunate that little notice of this aspect has so long been taken by Indian scholars in their attempts to place Indian philosophy in the perspective of the Western philosophies. And what we have been given has only been a table of parallel world-views on either side. A world-view, however, is not philosophy. Philosophy is an activity, progressively leading on to new truths. What comparative philosophy can best do is to trace parallel lines of progress, parallelly-motivated dynamics of thought”.<sup>1</sup> Indian philosophy is mainly concerned with the realization of the nature of self and its freedom from all kinds of worldly attachment which created a deep interest among the ancient Indian philosophers to study the nature of consciousness. Indian philosophical schools emancipated the association of self or subjectivity with consciousness and tried to search for its liberation. In ancient Indian philosophy it is thought that the lack of knowledge about self is the reason behind bondage and the bondage can be removed by true knowledge of the self and the world. As knowledge has an inextricable association with consciousness so it makes the philosophers interested in studying the nature of consciousness. More specifically saying, consciousness is considered as identical with self in Advaita Vedānta philosophy. Consciousness has mainly two aspects in terms of explaining its nature, such as it can be explained through the activity of mind or mental states and on the other hand, it has to be explained through subjective perspective as well. The first is quite easier to observe the mental states or activity and try to understand the nature of consciousness whereas the second one is difficult as far as philosophy is concerned. The first one is mainly the task of the science or more specifically to say, of neuroscience whereas philosophy is concerned with the aspect of subjective feeling.

In the western philosophy, we have seen that Descartes talked about two entities like mind and matter; the essence of mind is consciousness whereas the essential features of matter are existence, changeability. It creates the mind-body interaction problem and it goes for dualism or dual reality. The problem in this theory is how matter and mind being two different entities can interact with each other. Later in the philosophy of Berkeley, we have seen the reduction of all material or physical phenomenon into mind; *Esse est percipi* which means existence is dependent on perception, so, nothing exists but one's own mind and mental states. But it would be wrong to say that Advaita philosophy seems lean on Berkeley's thought because Advaita Vedānta considers mind as a physical entity. In modern times, neuroscience tries to explain the brain activity by observing one's behavior but they could not reach the position to explain the subjective feeling or self. So, the Advaita Vedānta philosophy tried to explain the nature of consciousness in terms of its association with self and making the material world dependent on consciousness which helped them to avoid dualism of mind and body. Śamkara's non-dualist approach tried to reject such dualism not as an embodied being rather a spiritual or conscious being with body and talks about thinking beyond this empirical world. Śamkara's Advaita School talks about pure consciousness which is untouched by anything or any physical phenomenon. Thus Śamkara's concept of consciousness (*cit*) which he thinks as a fundamental substance becomes *nirvisaya* and *nirāśraya*.

### **Consciousness and the Self of Advaita**

There is a well known conversation between Janaka, the king of Videha and a sage named *Yājñavalkya* in *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* about the nature of consciousness. Firstly, the king Janaka asked the sage *Yājñavalkya* that what the source of light is for man. The sage replied that it is the sun and moon in day and night time respectively which regulates all the activities of humans. Again, the king asked the sage that what the source of light is when sun and moon both are not available. The sage replied that it is the fire that will serve the man in absence of moon and sun as light and when fire will not be available then it is speech that will serve as the light. But what if all these are not available at one point of time then according to the sage it is the self who will serve as the light behind all activities of

mankind. Now, the question would arise that what is the nature of self actually?<sup>2</sup>

According to *Yājñavalkya*, “this infinite, boundless, beyond space and time, endless entity which is also called *Puruca*, identified with the intellect. Presupposing the likeness (of the intellect), it moves between the two worlds; it thinks, as it were, and shakes, as it were”.<sup>3</sup> Now, if we explain it in sense of Śamkara’s Advaita tradition, we can understand that, here, the light indicates towards a mean or source of knowledge. As light illuminates everything to us through our eyes so the self or consciousness is also something that helps us to acquire knowledge about something. And when there is no object for knowing then what remains is consciousness itself which is called pure or transcendental consciousness and it is free from empirical experiences. Now, the question would arise that what is the locus of such inner light or consciousness? Because all other sources of light are the phenomenon of external world, we can see them but this kind of entity like consciousness is not material. It cannot be located in our physical organs, body or mind because all these are also matter. But when we talk about empirical consciousness we indicate towards such consciousness which is expressed through our intellect, mind and body organs or what is called *antahkarama* (mind, body, intellect) and thus it is also called *Jīvātman* or individual self who thinks himself same with mind, body and intellect as a result of ignorance about true nature of self. According to Śamkara, the consciousness manifests itself through intellect and intellect through mind and mind through the organs and finally organs through body.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, all the humans mistakenly recognize them identified with such material entity like mind, body or intellect. And this is helpful in practical or empirical daily life in waking and dreaming state but cannot be found in deep sleep state of self. Thus there is no empirical experience found in this stage. But according to Śamkara, we can find pure consciousness in deep sleep state of self. Thus, pure consciousness is different from all other states as it serves as the foundation for all other states of self. So, mind or body cannot illuminate anything without consciousness because for illumination it needs the light from consciousness and they are not stable and they are changing in every moment. So, pure consciousness is identical with self but as we think it

identical with mind or body so it is considered to be as doer or knower. Consciousness or the self does transcendence mind and intellect too. Now, the question may arise regarding the possibility of practical or empirical knowledge. One may say that as the pure consciousness is self luminous it should be made us able to know everything all the time but in practical we can know one particular object at a time. Responding to such objection the Advaita would say about *upādhi* which limits the individual self and it specifies the content of our knowledge in the light of *antahkarana*. But the pure consciousness illumines itself in all the times. In the context of empirical and pure consciousness Śamkara opines that “There are two visions, one eternal and invisible and the other transitory and visible ...Through that unfailing eternal vision, which is called the self-effulgent light, the Self always sees the other, transitory vision in the dream and waking states, as idea and perception respectively, and becomes the seer of sight...”<sup>5</sup>

The Advaita philosophy has tried to avoid the mind body dualism by talking about only one reality i.e. consciousness. For Advaita Vedānta, the mind and intellect are matter in subtle form which brings both the body and mind under one category i.e. matter. At the same time, it raises a question that if *antahkarana* is considered as matter then how it can interacts with consciousness. According to Advaita Vedanta, *antahkarana* is changing and limited in space and time whereas the pure consciousness is not changing rather it is unchanging, all pervading reality. So, the mind- body interaction problem emerges as the mind and consciousness interaction problem here. In this regard Paul Hacker opines, “This *Sāṅkhya*, theory has one advantage over the traditional Western notion of soul. There is no split between the body and the soul (*mind*), in so far as the soul (*mind*) is the Inner Sense....But if there was no split between body and soul (*mind*), there was the idea of another split which proved much more fatal than the differentiation of body and soul has ever been... The Vedanta theory of the self is greatly indebted to the *Sāṅkhya*”.<sup>6</sup>

In this context, Advaita response would be the idea of superimposition or illusory play by which body and mind is superimposed on the self and this world is superimposed on Brahman. Because of ignorance about true knowledge about self or individual self and its sameness with *Brahman* we

falsely believe that this world and my body is separated but the real knowledge is *Tat Tvam Asi* which means I and *Brahman* are same; every objects or creatures in this universe are the manifestation of one and same reality called *Brahman*, thus the Advaitins overcame the problem of dualism by accepting the pure consciousness as sole reality. According to Advaitins the superimposition and the ground of superimposition is false and they identify this world, individual self and pure consciousness as one; here, the consciousness takes the centre stage.

### **Transcendental Consciousness of Husserl**

Husserl argues for transcendental ego or pure consciousness which is reached at by the method of epoche. Phenomenology is the study of the structure of consciousness. The founder of phenomenology, Husserl believed that consciousness is intentional. This means that our thoughts and awareness are always directed towards something. However, for him, Intentional object should not be confused with mental images or physical objects. Instead, they are like objects of our thoughts - more like signs on a signboard. Husserl had some main ideas in his philosophy. He talked about things like the essence of stuff, a way of describing things, a concept called epoche, the idea of intentionality, the life world concept and transcendental phenomenology. He called his approach “transcendental phenomenology,” and the word “transcendental” is connected to Kant’s ideas.<sup>7</sup> What Husserl meant is that everything in the world and the world itself gets its meaning from our consciousness and how we think about things. So according to him, our consciousness is intentional. He got the idea from his teacher Brentano: consciousness is intentional. This means that whenever we are conscious of something, our thoughts are always pointed or directed towards that something. For example, when we say someone loves, hates, or knows something, it implies there’s always another person or object involved that is being loved, hated, or known.

Now, when we talk about intentional acts, there are various kinds of activities like loving, thinking, feeling, imagining, perceiving, calculating, asserting, doubting, and more. In each of these acts, there are three important parts: The thing being loved, known, or hated: This is the object or person

that our thoughts are focused on. The person who loves, knows, or hates: This is the individual who is experiencing these thoughts and feelings. The act of loving, knowing, or hating: This is the actual activity or process of feeling or thinking about something. Brentano had this idea called “intentionality” and he wanted to explain the difference between physical phenomena and mental phenomena.<sup>8</sup> He believed that mental phenomena are different from physical phenomena because of intentional relations. These intentional relations, according to him, are like mental connections. He saw them as mental acts, things your mind does. Husserl uses ‘intentional’ instead of ‘mental’ to avoid a certain way of thinking. According to him, the intentional object (what we are thinking about) isn’t an image in our minds or a real thing outside. For example, when we think of our favorite novel, we are not picturing it in our mind or holding the actual book; it is something else. Husserl calls this ‘transcendental subjectivity.’<sup>9</sup> It is not part of regular psychology or the world we see; it is about our conscious thoughts and how they give meaning to everything we experience. Phenomenologists like Husserl focus on this ‘transcendental subjectivity’ to understand the meaning of things in our experiences.

### **In comparison with Husserl’s phenomenological account of consciousness**

Vedānta and Husserl’s phenomenological tradition is such a field where one may search for a parallel line. Husserl’s idealism talks about transcendental consciousness as the foundation for all knowledge and this can give apodictic certainty as same as Advaita Vedānta where this transcendental consciousness is also called *ātman* or *Brahman* which is not only fundamental but also unconditional. Husserl was in search for the primordial data which is directly given to the consciousness and the Vedānta philosophy also talks about such self-giveness. One of the similar principles of both Advaitins and Husserl’s philosophy is the search for the nature of consciousness i.e. whether it is intentional or non-intentional and whether it is self-revealing and its contribution. Husserl used the term “phenomenology” to indicate that all the objects of this world and this world itself is based on the ground of pre-consciousness and its intentionality and this raised question that my transcendental ego I interact with other transcendental egos. Here,



such spiritual ego or subjective ego seems quite similar with Husserl's transcendental ego. Śamkara rejects the intentional character of pure consciousness because he thinks that the directedness towards outer objects is the result of ignorance as we have discussed above; for him, pure consciousness is self revealing and it is beyond any logical proof or argument. Husserl's approach of consciousness talks about consciousness about some object or something, thus it is intentional in nature. For western phenomenology, consciousness cannot be thought without any object, it seems theoretically impossible. Consciousness always directed towards something. The concept of consciousness is the key to distinguish the mental and physical phenomenon. So, the Advaitins accepted the mind or intellect and sense organs or body as the medium through which pure consciousness reflects and these mediums are physical in nature whereas Husserl and his teacher Brentano talked about two separation of mental and physical phenomenon. In Śamkara's view, the pure consciousness is primary or fundamental substance but when it is directed towards outer objects then it is secondary. According to J. N. Mohanty, it is not reasonable to ignore the intentionality of consciousness because of two totally different entities. In this context we can say that Rāmānuja in his qualified non-dualism talked about dependence of these two entities on one reality which he calls 'God'. The difference between Husserl and Śamkara's pure consciousness is revolving around association and disassociation of consciousness with this world; Husserl opines that everything is constituted by the consciousness whereas Advaitins are talking about the detachment of pure consciousness with this material world and remain as a pure residuum. Husserl's phenomenological activity is mainly divided into two parts; firstly he introduces the concept of epoche that the transcendental subjectivity can be arrived at through the activity of transcendental epoche. Secondly, he talks about the constitutive nature of consciousness; it is constitutive in the sense that the whole world or its knowledge can be meaningful only through consciousness. Husserl states that "By epoche I reduce my natural human ego and psychic life to my transcendental phenomenological ego, the realm of transcendental phenomenological self experience. The objective world that exists for me, that always has and always will exist for me- this world with all its objects, I

said, derives its whole sense and its existential status, which it has for me, from myself, for me as the transcendental ego, the ego who comes fore only with the transcendental phenomenological epoche".<sup>10</sup>For him, every conscious state has a correlative sense or meaning which is called noema. Husserl also talked about the intrinsically temporal nature of consciousness and it creates its unity as an ego. Consciousness is the only entity that can provide evidence for any kind of cognition or cognitive act which seems similar with the Śamkara's claim of consciousness as underlying foundation for all cognitive acts. But at the absolute stage Śamkara's consciousness keeps aside object directedness or remains non intentional. Śamkara and Husserl both talked about the witness consciousness. Śamkara defined pure consciousness as *Sākshi Caitanya* or witness consciousness that does not involve itself in any action and kept it aside from the doer or enjoyer. Witness consciousness cannot be the object of experience as it observes or witnesses all the stages of the self namely waking, deep sleep stages; so it considers consciousness a phenomenological pure perceiver or observer. In Husserl's transcendental ego or I is something which can be arrived at by a method of epoche; in this regard he defines epoche as a method of keeping aside all presuppositions or beliefs about the world and in doing so what will be remaining thereis the pure consciousness which is untouched by the self or person or body itself which is similar like Advaita witness consciousness. To describe the reflective ego Eugen Fink opines, "This ego knowinglydirects itself toward the universal world apperceptions its theme. The disconnection of the world, however, not only makes possible the formation of anonworldly reflecting-self, but ... also makes possible the discovery of the true subject of the belief in the world: the transcendental subjectivity which accepts the world".<sup>10</sup> Fink, E. (1970). Husserl's philosophy and contemporary criticism. In R. O. Elveton (Ed. & Trans.), *The phenomenology of Husserl: Selected critical readings*. pp. 73-147.

So, here, Fink talks about three egos as introduced by Husserl; those are empirical ego who is involved in the empirical world, the second is the transcendental ego constituting the world and the third ego observed the distinction between first two egos and such observer should be disinterested in the world hence it can be called a disinterested spectator, thus it seems

similar with Advaita witness consciousness but Husserl's transcendental is a constitutive ego as well.

### **Concluding Remarks**

So here we have discussed the ideas of two philosophers, Husserl and Śamkara, regarding consciousness. Husserl believes consciousness is always directed towards an external object or we can say consciousness is about something or directed towards something while Śamkara distinguishes between pure consciousness and the mind or ego. Advaita, like Husserl's phenomenology, sees everything presented to consciousness as transcendent, not part of consciousness itself. From the above discussion we have seen that Husserl initially made a conceptual difference between ego and consciousness but did not maintain it consistency like the Advaita. In Indian non dualist tradition the consciousness is different from ego like mind or body or sense organs. Husserl made the distinction to make us aware of two egos like empirical and transcendental ego. Śamkara and Husserl, they both consider consciousness as a foundation for any cognitive activity. But in Advaita philosophy there is a sharp distinction between pure consciousnesses and the mind or ego. This distinction is not there in Husserl's phenomenological account of consciousness. Husserl was more interested in the epistemic structure of consciousness and emphasized on the issue of certainty. Advaita consciousness reveals all the objects of knowing on its own and such intentional activity is associated with the mind or ego not with pure consciousness. So Śamkara and Husserl's perspective on pure consciousness as we have observed that there are both similarities and dissimilarities between these two theories of consciousness but there is scope for further analysis to find out the field of interaction between them.

### **Notes & References**

<sup>1</sup> See Mohanty, cited in Bilimoria, (1993), p. 249.

<sup>2</sup>See *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanisad* 4.3.6 and 4.3.7 with the commentary of Sankaracarya translated by Swami Madhavananda, Publisher: Advaita Ashrama.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>See Sarvapriyananda, S. (2017). Ancient wisdom, modern questions: Vedantic perspectives in consciousness studies.

<sup>5</sup>See *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanisad* 1.4.10 commentary of Sankaracarya, translated by Swami Madhavananda, Publisher: Advaita Ashrama.

<sup>6</sup>See Halbfass, Wilhelm (Ed.) (1995) *Philology and Confrontation: Paul Hacker on Tradition and Modern Vedanta*, State University of New York Press. P. 180.

<sup>7</sup>See Maharana, (2009), p. 1-12.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>See Husserl, (1973), p.26.



## G. H.von Wright and Sharad Deshpande on Forbearance: What has Occasion to Do with Forbearance ?

Venusa Tinyi\*

### Abstract

The concept of forbearance got the attention of G.H. von Wright when he developed modern deontic logic in 1951. For formal reasons, he weakened the notion of occasion in developing the concept of forbearance. He then introduced the categories of 'not-doing simpliciter' and omission and preferred to use these terms in place of forbearance. Sharad Deshpande expresses his apprehension over this move by von Wright saying that occasion is internal to the definition of forbearance and if the notion is weakened, the concept of forbearance will suffer certain paradoxical situation. However, occasion is being used by him more as a subjective term. In the present work, attempt has been made to take the discussion of this concept further by treating it as a complex social term. The notion of occasion is what distinguishes forbearance from not-doing simpliciter. It argues for the constitutive function of occasion for defining the concept of forbearance.

**Keywords:** *forbearance; not-doing simpliciter; occasion; norms; naming; constitutive*

It would not be an exaggeration to say that it was G.H. von Wright who first undertook a systematic study of the concept of forbearance, a concept which has found significance in such studies as moral philosophy, philosophy of action, philosophy of law, deontic logic, etc. The concept was mainly analysed by him in the context of a logical study on action in his *Norms and Actions* (1963) which is now considered a classic in this area of inquiry. Earlier it was briefly discussed by John Locke while conceptualizing liberty in his celebrated *An Essay Concerning Human*

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*Understanding* (1690). Liberty has to make sense in relation to action and action is explained in relation to volition which, in turn, accounts for voluntary and involuntary action. Forbearance as a consequent of volition, therefore, was conceptualized in relation to freedom. It gives the idea that freedom means one has the choice whether to perform or to forbear an action.

For instance, I have a right whether or not to exercise my freedom of expression. Another example is this: sitting still when a judge enters a courtroom. When a judge enters the courtroom, one is *expected* to stand. However, it requires the determination of a will to sit still when the occasion provides one with the opportunity and reason to stand. Thus, omission as a concept is relevant for studies in moral and legal philosophies. For instance, in the recent time, moral and legal philosophers like Patricia Smith (2005), Giovanni Boniolo and Gabriele De Anna (2006), among others, have argued that omission is an evaluative concept. It is value laden as Boniolo and De Anna stresses, “although omission is a morally-laden notion, we cannot appeal to omissions in order to make moral judgments: rather, when we say that there was an omission, we have already emitted our judgment” (290). On a similar line, Smith (2005) argues that omission is embedded in norms and values and so if one is engaging with the concept in the context of social practice, the concept is being inevitably treated as an evaluative concept. Since omission is treated as an action and omission of an act has consequences, it is consequently and significantly related to the ideas of responsibility and punishment. For instance, if a doctor omits to attend to her patient resulting in the dead of her patient, then she would be held responsible for the dead of her patient.

Though reasonable attention was given to the concept of forbearance by von Wright, there still remains much to be explored and developed as the present analysis will suggest. For formal reasons, von Wright replaced the notion of forbearance by omission while fine-tuning his views on the logic of action and the logic of norms.<sup>1</sup> He introduced a term ‘not-doing simpliciter’ to contrast with and explicate the complex notion of forbearance (von Wright 1963, 45) and omission (von Wright 1983, 109). Sharad Deshpande critically engaged with the views of von Wright by probing deeper into the concept of forbearance in his article “Occasion, Forbearance and not-doing simpliciter”

(1987). His central objective was to problematize the conceptual distinction between not-doing simpliciter and the weak sense of forbearance. He developed his argument by pointing out that von Wright's treatment of the notion of occasion to characterize omission was inadequate and subsequently offered a stronger sense of occasion to address the problem. However, no significant discussion on the concept of forbearance ensued in the direction of their works. Therefore, attempt is being made in the present work to explore their basic insights on forbearance with hope to generate further deliberation and development of the concept. I will do so by exploring and articulating the conceptual relationship between occasion and forbearance and offering a viewpoint which is even stronger and wider than that of Deshpande. I agree with Deshpande that normative and axiological elements, including occasion, cannot be sanitized from the notion of forbearance despite von Wright's attempt to conceptualize it without axiological elements. However, I go on to show that Deshpande's treatment of the concept tends to be subjective and personal which, in turn, may make the concept arbitrary. So I offer a perspective which is social or public and relatively objective. I argue that social norms and values are constitutive of the concept of forbearance. Social norms and values are not just external conditions which enable us to make sense of omission but that it is through them that we cognize the not-doing of a possible action as an act as forbearance.

### **Conceptualizing forbearance**

Broadly, we can categorize human action into two types, namely, performance (commission) of an action and forbearance (omission) of an action. Given any possible situation to act, one can either perform the act or forbear to act. If one carefully follows von Wright's discussions on the general idea of action, one will notice four aspects of action as given below:

1. Productive action, e.g., opening a door
2. Preventive action, e.g., closing a door (preventing theft)
3. Omitting to produce, e.g., leaving a door closed
4. Omitting to prevent, e.g., leaving a door open

It can be seen from the above that while the first two requires the active movement of the body, the latter two require the inactivity of the

body. Omission could have been merely viewed as a state of affairs (and not an action) had it not been for some important consideration such as volition or intention, occasion, etc. On the other hand, mere bodily movement involving my hands or feet does not make it an action for the simple reason that it is not a part of my volition. It happens naturally when I decide to take a walk. At best, it is part of the *process* of an action. Choosing not to perform an action when one *can* perform it or is *expected* to perform it in a given context is significant in that it can affect the world in much the same way as performance of an action can. However, there are others who think that forbearance is not an action alleging that it lacks spatio-temporal location or causal relation unlike actions which occur in time and space and have causal relation (See Brand, 1971; Chappell, 2002; Dowe, 2001; Weinryb, 1980). It may be noted that both von Wright and Deshpande treat it as an action and such a position is being presupposed in the present work as well.

The concept of forbearance got the attention of von Wright when he developed modern deontic logic in 1951.<sup>2</sup> When his logical system encountered some difficulty, von Wright revised his approach. He wanted to ground his idea of action on the basic ideas of change and time in relation to states of affairs. In this context, he introduced the categories of ‘not-doing simpliciter’ and omission. Earlier, von Wright defines forbearance as follows: “An agent, on a given occasion forbears the doing of a certain thing if, and only if, he *can do* this thing, but *does in fact not do it*” (1963, 45). “Can” is a necessary condition but not a sufficient condition for defining the concept at hand. More is needed to explain and define the concept. Accordingly, we will need a set of related terms such as opportunity (von Wright 1983, 170), ability, change, occasion, etc (Deshpande 1987, 103-104). With these key terms, we can briefly elucidate the idea of forbearance as follows: Suppose there is an open window and a storm is coming, then it is an *occasion* to close a window. The notion of occasion is related with the “when and where” of an action (von Wright 1963, 23; 1983, 170). If the window is already closed, then it does not provide one with the *opportunity* to close the window. Also given the occasion and the opportunity, if one is crippled and bedridden, one lacks the *ability* to close the window. In such a case, it cannot be said that one forbears the act of closing a window.



In working out his logic of action, logical forms of action sentences to be more precise, von Wright defines an act in relation to change (1963, see chapter 3 titled *Act and Ability*). “To every act (of the kind which we are here considering), there corresponds a change or an event in the world” (1963, 39). The natural question is this: “How is the idea of change related to the idea of forbearance?” For him, the *result* of an act is related to the idea of change. When an agent is involved in preventing a change from coming about, it is an act and not a mere state of affairs which remains unchanged. The natural tendency or expectation in a given state of affairs is change but such a change has failed to obtain because an agent is involved in preventing it to come about. From this perspective, keeping the door open at night is a change in that it is a result of forbearance of an act. It is expected to be closed at night. In this way, the notion of change ironically includes the notion of not-change as well.

In addition to the above set of categories, one also requires an element of intention or decision. If a window closes by itself, say by the force of the wind, it is not an intentional act. Or if a person is unaware or fails to notice that a window is open and so nothing was done to close the window, it is not an act of forbearance. To label an act of not-doing as an act of forbearance, a situation has to emerge in such a way that an act could have been performed but a decision to the contrary is being made. In simple term, one can define forbearance as *intentional* not-doing. Deshpande goes on to add that the occasion should be such that a person experiences a kind of provocation or temptation to react in a certain manner but *decides* not to do it (1987, 105). of course, this is not a necessary condition but certainly an important category to understand the concept at hand. In the example given above, deciding to keep the window open, or not doing anything to close the window is significant in that the coming storm is likely to mess up the house. Normally, a messed up house results due to forbearance of an act. In this sense, forbearance as an act is intricately related to the consequence of an act (and not only with the result of an act i.e., open window) because the result of an act comes with a sense of failure and achievement or blameworthy and praiseworthy. However, for whatever reason if the house is already in a mess and the occupant never bothers to close a window, then not closing a window in that given situation is not really an act of forbearance since intention or decision

is not involved. It is a fit case of negligence although negligence is defined by some, like Patricia Smith (2005), as a form of forbearance.

We just a got a hint that there can be types or varieties of forbearance. von Wright also recognizes negligence, refrainment or abstention as different forms of omission (1983, 110).<sup>3</sup> However, it is beyond the scope of the present study to look into this aspect. We will, nonetheless, take a closer look at the classification of the concept by Deshpande, namely, strong forbearance and weak forbearance (1987 104-105).<sup>4</sup> When one withholds oneself from engaging in a physical fight on being slapped by another person; it is a case of strong forbearance. Here, the person is *resisting* an impulse to fight back; *with holding* oneself from eating an ice-cream on being offered while observing a fast is another example; in this case, a person is *overcoming* a temptation. These are two instances of strong forbearance. In contrast, when a person does not experience any temptation or provocation in a given occasion, then it is a weak forbearance. For example, a law abiding citizen who is never tempted to jump red (light) signal while driving even if there is an opportunity to do that, say, absence of other cars and traffic policeman. Here, the agent may have internalized the traffic rules in such a way that he no longer experiences any inclination or temptation to jump a traffic signal. A willful decision to resist from being provoked into performance of some action is what characterizes strong forbearance. There is a natural tendency to react or respond to a given situation but one willfully decides to act in a contrary manner. This classification may be motivated by moral or social consideration. Deshpande is of the view that moral praises for acts of forbearance will differ in degrees depending on the degrees of temptation one encounters (1987, 105). Thus, it can be observed that factors like decision (against a real force of temptation or provocation) and moral appraisal distinguish strong from weak forbearance according to him.

### **Weak and strong occasions**

We now come to the central question of the present work – *What has occasion to do with forbearance?* The importance of occasion in understanding forbearance is such that Deshpande makes it *internal* to the definition of forbearance. For him, there is a *real* connection between occasion and forbearance in the form of felt temptation or provocation and

so one cannot define forbearance without involving the notion of occasion. Their relation is not like the relation of antecedent and consequent of a material implication where there is no real connection (1987, 107). Accordingly, Deshpande argues that occasion is the defining feature of the concept of forbearance. It is precisely from this trajectory – the element of occasion – that one can also see the difference between not-doing and forbearance. It may be noted that to distinguish between these two is one of the two main objectives of his paper (1987, 102), the other being to answer the question if forbearance is anything more than the negation of an action (1987, 102) which, in my opinion, was left unaddressed. We will have something to say on this point later.

Deshpande alleges that although von Wright's definition of forbearance includes occasion, his notion is too weak. It merely captures the idea of a state of affairs embedded in time and space. von Wright defines occasion as "the spatio-temporal location, the When and the Where of the performance of an action" (von Wright 1963, 23; 1983, 170). This notion of occasion is primarily limited to capturing the ideas of the initial state and the end state of a single action (von Wright 1983, 112). Deshpande alleges that such a weak definition of occasion is not different from the notion of a situation, a description of (external) states of affairs (1987, 110). A situation thus lacks a deontic status unlike occasion which is goal-oriented (1987, 109) and has internal relation with forbearance. Deshpande opines that if the distinction is not maintained between situation and occasion or what may be termed as weak and strong occasion, then no distinction can also be maintained between forbearance and not-doing simpliciter (1987, 110). Though the notion of 'deontic status' is not clearly defined by him, it seems to include such notions as, decision, intention, goal, moral considerations, etc.

"A logic of action, clearly, has to take this into account and treat omission as something different from mere not doing something" (von Wright 1983, 109). Realizing the inevitable connection of moral ideas associated with the concept of forbearance and wanting to keep his formal system simple and conspicuous, von Wright discarded the use of this concept and decided to adopt the concept of omission in his later works.<sup>5</sup> For him, forbearance as a term is too complex and value loaded and so it raises certain technical difficulty. Such a difficulty is likely to defeat the purpose of

logical analysis since the aim of logic, among others, is to break down complex terms into simpler terms. In order to address this difficulty, von Wright introduces the weaker notion of occasion which is then used to define the concept of not-doing simpliciter. It is a term which is used to maintain the objective character of an action vis-à-vis omission of an action. It does not use subjective terms like intention or decision or volition for its definition. It is free from the concern of moral praise or a sense of achievement and is, therefore, outside the scope of ethics (Deshpande 1987, 102). From this point of view, we can clearly see that not-doing simpliciter is not a mere negation of an act in the sense forbearance or omission (Deshpande 1987, 102; von Wright 1983, 104). Rather, it is ‘absence of doing’, a mere possible action which is not brought about because the occasion does not warrant it. Deshpande writes, “It is clear that to refer to (someone’s) not-doing something simpliciter is not to name any act. It is to offer a description to the effect that the agent, on the given occasion, is not-doing that something” (1987, 102).

Given the above analysis, the differences between not-doing simpliciter and forbearance may be highlighted as follows:

*i. Act-name:* The former need not be defined in relation to act-categories or names of action while the latter usually is.

*ii. Normative status:* The former is not subjected to norm but the latter is.

*iii. Moral status:* the former is free from moral evaluation but the latter is subject to moral evaluation.

*iv. Symbolization:* following, von Wright’s symbolization, they can be respectively symbolized as follows (Deshpande 1987, 104):

a. Not-doing simpliciter:  $\neg d(\neg pTp)$

b. Forbearance:  $f(\neg pTp)$

In the above symbolization, ‘*f*’ stands for forbearing, ‘*d*’ stands for doing and ‘*p*’ stands for atomic proposition like “A window is open”. It may be noted that following the given symbolization, (a) and (b) are not logically equivalent expressions because forbearance (which is defined in relation to stronger notion of occasion) and doing are not inter-definable terms.

Deshpande considered a thought experiment to probe deeper into the concept of forbearance and to articulate his version of the concept (1987, 105-106): A person, A, known to be a morally upright person is deeply engrossed in his reading at his friend's library. His friend left behind a wad of currency. No one was around except A. However, A did not take the money. The condition is such that everything required to define the forbearance of an action was satisfied. Deshpande, however, succinctly asks: "In such a situation, is A's not stealing the money a case of not-doing simpliciter or one of forbearing?" (1987, 106) According to him, it will be cruel if one says that A forbears to steal the money. His point is that though there was a logical possibility, there was no *real* possibility to steal the money. It means that A, being a morally upright person, did not experience any temptation to take the money. Accordingly, Deshpande suggests that this particular case involving A in relation to the possible action of taking the money is *closer* to the idea of not-doing simpliciter than forbearance since it is devoid of the elements of temptation. From moral and legal points of view, he goes on to maintain that there is hardly any difference between not-doing simpliciter and weak forbearance as both do not involve moral notions like temptation, adoption of a principle, inclination, decision, etc.

Deshpande alleges that von Wright's definitions of occasion and situation are indistinguishable since, for von Wright, occasion is defined primarily as a spatio-temporal locus with initial state and end state: a movement from one state of affairs to another in time. He writes, "Occasion, in its ordinary sense, includes many things which von Wright's definition excludes" (1987, 110). He goes on to point out that "a connection cannot be established between occasion and a non-performance (of a specific action) unless one uses the term occasion in the strong sense of the term (1987, 110-111). Therefore, after carefully analyzing von Wright's categories of not-doing simpliciter and omission, he proposed what is being termed as the "Paradox of Forbearance" (1987, 111). The paradox may be described as follows: If occasion in the strong sense is used to define forbearance, then we have strong forbearance; and if occasion in the weak sense (without any moral element) is used to define forbearance, then we get weak forbearance. According to Deshpande, weak forbearance is indistinguishable from not-doing simpliciter. Now the paradoxical element is that since not-doing

simpliciter is not a deontic category (as alleged by Deshpande), weak forbearance cannot meaningfully convey the sense or meaning of forbearance and if one wants to use it as a deontic category, then it becomes morally loaded (involving the strong sense of occasion). In this way, Deshpande opines that the very purpose of introducing not-doing simpliciter and delineating it from forbearance stands defeated and fruitless. At this point, we can return to the question if forbearance is anything more than the negation of an action. Since logic of action and deontic logic are based on the logic of change, they will only require the weaker notion of occasion for their definitions. Therefore, from the formal point of view, not-doing simpliciter can be understood simply as a negation of a state of affairs and forbearance (weak) as a negation of an action (act-category). However, within the general theory of action and norms, it is difficult to hold that forbearance is nothing more than the negation of an action. It appears to me that the notion of forbearance is more complex in that it not only presupposes the action which is not brought about but also other possible actions and reasons in a given occasion. Viewed from this trajectory, Deshpande's paradox may be partially or minimally resolved. However, the objective of the present study does not permit me to go beyond this loose observation.

### **In the footsteps of Deshpande**

Let us consider another thought experiment: Mr. X went to a mall to buy a shirt and checked out two shirts – red and white. He ended up buying the white shirt. Can it be said that he forbore to buy the red shirt? Note that he satisfies all the conditions – ability, intention, decision, occasion and opportunity. To make it more interesting, let us assume that he was equally tempted to buy both initially. On getting home, he was greeted by a series of troubles. His son troubled him with this question: “Why didn't you buy me a car (toy)?” His daughter followed: “Why didn't you bring me a Barbie (doll)?” It got worse when his wife grumbled: “Where is my chocolate you promised earlier?” What a situation !

Can it be said that Mr. X genuinely forbore all these acts of buying stuffs for his family including the red shirt? To exaggerate the problem, there are n-things in the mall which could have been purchased by him but he bought only one thing. Can it be said that he forbore to buy the rest of the items in the shop assuming that he has enough wealth to buy even the mall?

Coming to our point, how do we determine whether the non-buying of n-things which are all possible actions from the shop are acts of forbearance? Obviously, it is absurd to say that he is guilty of omitting n-possible actions at any given time. It is for this reason that forbearance has been rejected as an action by some. The non-doing of the above type (that is, n-possible actions due to ignorance or unintended negligence or unintentional refraining) has been termed as “non-action” by Giovanni Boniolo and Gabriele De Anna (2006, 294). Conceptually, it is indistinguishable from the notion of not-doing simpliciter. Such type of non-doing or non-action can be safely omitted from the domains of norms, action and values as they are free from normative and axiological concerns. We need something more to convert non-doing of some possible action into forbearance and to this ‘something more’, we will now turn our attention to.

We have seen the attempt of Deshpande to define forbearance in relation to occasion. For him, occasion provides the motivation for an action; it is goal-oriented, it is internal, real, etc. His notion of occasion clearly embeds moral elements as well if we consider his paradox of forbearance. Taking some clues from his works, we will now take a closer look at the notion of occasion. It is a complex and socially loaded term which makes *naming* of an action possible. In addition to its important function of naming an act in a given situation, it is also needed to conceptualize normative categories. It is occasion that makes an act moral or legal or neither or both. For e.g., walking as a bodily movement is value-free but it can be subject to legal or moral appraisal depending on the occasion or context of walking. If a person is walking on the private property of a stranger, she may be accused of trespassing someone’s privacy. However, if she is walking in the park, it is a form of exercise for which she can be praised. Whether or not walking is praiseworthy, therefore, depends on the given occasion of an agent. Even morally controversial action like killing is made legally acceptable if one kills in self-defense. Perhaps, the significance of occasion in naming or classifying actions and activities can be highlighted with the help of a creative text given below.<sup>6</sup> It reads, “*Money has different names:*

- In marriage, it is called dowry
- In temple or church, it is called donation (or offering)
- In school, it is fee

- In divorce, it is alimony
- In court, it is fine
- To kidnappers, it is ransom
- When you pay the government, it is tax
- When you borrow from the bank, it is loan
- When employer gives it to workers, it is salary.”

Each of the above names is an instance of transaction of money involving the activity of “giving and taking”. The activity of monetary transaction in itself is a sheer physical activity involving two parties; it is a sheer *description* without a *name* until it is located in a context, or until an occasion is provided to name it. The social context provides the occasion for naming the activity of ‘giving and taking’ the money in question. These occasions for performing actions are created and defined by the society. In this way, occasion creates certain expectation regarding the performance or forbearance of an action. In the above given list, both performance and forbearance of appropriate actions have important social (moral or legal) consequences. In the light of the above elucidation, we can hold that an act is an act because it has a name. Unlike not-doing simpliciter which is characterized by Deshpande as a description of a possible act, forbearance comes with an act-name (1987, 102). In other words, by forbearance we mean ‘forbearance of an act’ in much the same way as we say ‘performance of an act’. What is seemingly a description of a possible action in certain context may in another occasion be given a name. For instance, there was no name for ‘sexual harassment’ in the past not so long ago but today it is a name, an act which is a punishable offence.

The sense in which Deshpande claims that occasion is real and internal to the definition of forbearance is somewhat sketchy. For instance, real is defined by him as the agent’s actual desire to act (1987, 106) and internal is explained by way of juxtaposing it with material implication (1987, 107). While the former is tinted with subjective connotations, the meaning of the latter appears somewhat unusual. However, an important clue was provided by him in the process of discussion. It pertains to the notion of internalization: a person has so *internalized* the law of prohibition that he or she no longer feels tempted to violate the law (Deshpande 1987, 106). Deshpande is of the



view that this forbearance is a weak one which is ‘hardly distinguishable from not-doing simpliciter’ (1987, 106). However, for reasons to be provided in the immediately following paragraph, I take it that not-doing an act in obedience to the law (of prohibition) is certainly an act of forbearance which is significantly different from not-doing simpliciter.

Deshpande makes subjective elements like temptation or provocation the defining features of forbearance vis-à-vis occasion. Although personal reasons or elements for resisting a desire may be relevant for understanding the psychology of an agent, it may not be so for the philosophical or logical analysis of a concept. What is tempting for me (for instance, a glass of wine) may not be tempting at all to a teetotaler. And so defining forbearance, say, in relation to temptation can become quite arbitrary. Elements like desire, intention, choice, etc. may be internal to an agent. However, occasion is a complex social idea which needs deeper explanation and justification to characterise it as having an internal relation with the concept of forbearance. It is complex in the sense that occasion cannot be fully articulated or described. To use the analogy of Charles Taylor, it is like the behavior of a gentleman whom everyone can see it and yet the behavior cannot be explained explicitly in terms of stated rules (1984, 23). Social norms and values which *constitute* the occasion for an agent to act are external elements. Nonetheless, they can be internalized. It is this aspect of internalization of social norms and values which enables one to see and evaluate an act of forbearance or to forbear an act. In this sense, occasion has constitutive role towards conceptualizing forbearance. Only those members of a society who have internalized the norms, values, beliefs, etc. as a part of their social practice can cognize a not-doing of an act as forbearance. It is like football fans who are familiar with the rules of the game and shouting “Foul” or “Boo” or “Bravo” or “Goal”. Occasion creates expectation for an agent to perform an act and failure of the expectation enables the perception of a particular non-doing as an act of forbearance. In sum, it is occasion that makes a possible un-actualized action at a given situation either a not-doing simpliciter or a forbearance of an action. In the above thought experiment, Mr. X’s non-buying of n-things from the mall is an instance of not-doing simpliciter. Occasion does not require him to buy n-things. Buying everything from the mall just because he can, on the contrary, would invite unpleasant remarks

and judgments. His action may be considered either absurd or show of unwanted opulence.

### **Concluding remarks**

von Wright's decision to exclude moral elements to conceptualize forbearance resulted in discarding the stronger notion of occasion. Deshpande argues against this move and instead uses the stronger notion of occasion to essentialize the concept of forbearance. Along Deshpande's line of thought, I argue that occasion in the strong sense is needed to conceptualize forbearance. I maintain that occasion, however, is a complex social notion in contrast to Deshpande's use of it as a subjective or personal idea. Moreover, I maintain that occasion, which is embedded in social norms and values, has a constitutive role in defining forbearance. In other words, occasion – socially defined in terms of norms and values – are not just external conditions to understand an act of omission but it is through occasion that we cognize forbearance of an act itself. The present essay suggests that a thoroughgoing discussion of the concept can have far reaching implications on social and normative studies as well. For instance, forbearance of an action in the form of refusal to take orders from a higher authority may have significant political and moral implications. Such acts are usually considered 'rebellious', 'disobedience' or 'resistance' or 'non-cooperation', etc., a strategy employed even by Mahatma Gandhi during the Indian freedom movement. The decision of many nation states not to do anything about the ongoing Israel-Palestine or Russia-Ukraine conflict is not without consequences in the global politics. In legal and moral studies, the question of fixing and attributing responsibility for an action cannot be fully understood without a critical appraisal of the concept of forbearance. Since forbearance is comparatively a less explored and understood concept, the present exercise is also aimed at drawing the attention of the scholars in the relevant fields to have a more productive engagement with the concept.

### **Notes & References**

<sup>1</sup>In a recorded audio of a seminar organized by *Indian Council of Philosophical Research* in 1986 at Lucknow (which was shared with me by Prof. Sharad Deshpande himself), von Wright, while responding to the paper presented by Deshpande, expressed his regret for using the concept of forbearance in his

work saying that it is “too strong” with lots of connotations. A careful reader will notice that in his *Norm and Action* (1963), omission was not used in the technical sense and likewise, in his *Practical Reason* (1983), forbearance was not used as a technical term. So forbearance as a technical term was eventually discarded in his later works. For the present purpose, however, forbearance and omission are being treated as synonyms and they are being used interchangeably. Contexts of discussion will make it clear whenever they are being used otherwise.

<sup>2</sup>von Wright developed deontic logic in his seminal work which was published in the journal *Mind* in 1951 (von Wright, G.H: ‘Deontic Logic’, *Mind*, 60(237), 1951: pp.1-15).

<sup>3</sup>It is clear from his context of discussion that forbearance as a category needs to be distinguished from omission. In the present work, I will however treat them as synonyms.

<sup>4</sup>Even von Wright maintained a distinction between what could be termed as forbearance in the strong sense and forbearance in the widest or weakest sense. For him, the latter notion is devoid of moral elements and not related to psychological states or attitudes of the agent in question. See 1983, 109, 115-116.

<sup>5</sup>At this point it may be important to note that from the perspective of a logic of change and a logic of action, von Wright would have no issue with this contention. His desire is to eliminate value loaded terms from his formal systems. This move is part of his larger plan – to make deontic logic a proper branch of modal logic. Initially, he was troubled by the difficulties he faced in his classical system of deontic logic of 1951. Many challenging and unsettling issues were discussed in his *Norms and Action* (1963). Eventually and in order to save his deontic logic, he had to replace act-categories with proposition based on the works and suggestions of other logicians such as A.N Prior (1955), Erik Stenius (1963) and A.N. Anderson (1967). This resulted in the development of Standard Deontic Logic.

<sup>6</sup>This is a text message being circulated in social media, *WhatsApp* in the present case. A Google search can also give you similar passage. See (browse) Money Has Different Names In Different Places - Ncert English Summaries, CCE English Summaries, CBSC English Summaries, Class 10th, 9th, 8th, 7th, 6th - English grammar Knowledge - English Grammar Knowledge (accessed on 23/04/2024).

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# The Role of Constatives and Performatives in Speech Acts

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## Abstract

The theory of ‘*Speech Acts*’ given by Austin, brings out a new role of language that transcends the ‘fact stating’ function of language. For Austin, language does much more than only stating something as true or false. He talks about the things we do with language, i.e. about the performativity of language. He has discussed this new role of language at length in his work, “*How to do things with words*”. The very first task, with which he starts, is the distinction between constatives and performatives. Constatives are defined by their descriptive aspect; performatives, on the other hand, do not describe, they perform with words. But in his later lectures, Austin blurred this distinction by saying that a constative can have the performative aspect, and a performative contains the constative element as well. In this paper, an attempt has been made to analyze this distinction by taking ‘protest’ (language of protest) as an example of speech act. This paper also presents a detailed analysis of the inquiry that why this distinction was crucial for Austin, and what were the intent and need for, and the philosophical importance of blurring the distinction of constatives and performatives.

**Keywords:** *constative; performative; speech acts; language of protest*

## Speech Acts and Speech Act of Protest

Language is considered as a tool to represent or stand for something else. Signs of a language are used to say something which is beyond them, a function that rules out a flesh-to-flesh interaction or a physical blend of

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language with nature. Within this scenario we can appreciate how Austin brings the revolutionary turn by asserting that language basically amount to actions. The role of language is not limited to a passive duplication of reality, or only to making true/false statements. With language, we promise, we bet, we protest, we marry when we say, “I do”, in appropriate conditions and circumstances. These acts of promising, marrying, baptizing, bequeathing, protesting are all speech acts; acts which are performed in saying something. In speech act, the meaning of an utterance is interwoven with the total speech situation, in the context in which it is uttered, where meaning is not drawn atomistically only by words and sentences.

Language is commonly considered to be a conventional (and not a natural) tool to communicate something. Austin, in “*How to do Things with Words*” claims that all speech acts are *conventional acts*. They are conventional in the sense that some signs are to be taken as having certain meanings, beyond the lexical meaning, to attain more meaning non-naturally. It is conventional in the sense that we streamline speech-acts in one particular route of interpretation and stop it from being widely interpretable in many other possible routes. We also make a regular break between nature and our speech-actions in the sense that we do not allow the latter to be absorbed in the continuous stream of nature. The physical or natural actions like walking, eating, beating, and fishing are not speech-acts. The reason is that firstly they get into a direct and fleshy interaction with the material world, and secondly each of these acts can be explained in other alternative ways (just as Venus can be read as “*the morning star*” or “*the evening star*” or under many other descriptions). To say that speech-acts are conventional is to say that these two features are not present in speech-acts. Austin’s theory though acknowledging the fluidity of conventions makes the latter a necessary criterion for all speech acts – a broad standpoint which was adopted by Searle as well. The conventional nature of speech acts is explained by taking ‘protest’ as an example of *Speech Act*. This paper tries to understand the notion of conventionality through the lens of protests, and within the framework of conventionality, the distinction of constatives and performatives is also explained.

A protest is a speech act as we ‘do’ protest with the use of words in various ways, by arguments, by singing songs, by reciting poems, by making

pamphlets, banners, slogans, by signature campaigns, by shouting – all of which are examples of ‘*doing in saying*’. We find many examples of speech acts in Austin’s work, but unfortunately, except for a few stray mentions and illustrations (of both verbal and non-verbal protests). Austin does not treat protest as a speech act at length in his work. So the main point of worry can roughly be this – Austin’s theory presents a general framework for all speech acts. But certain speech acts like protests - with its apparently anti-theoretic and anti-conformist character built into them - cannot be subsumed under the formal structure of speech act theory and the schema of **felicity**<sup>1</sup> conditions formulated by Austin. Austin also observes that despite the essentially convention-ridden character of the speech-acts (as contrasted with the natural physical actions) “it is difficult to say where conventions begin and end...” (Austin 1962, p. 119). Austin himself was sensitive to two kinds of speech acts - one type is defined by a rigid structure of conventions, while the second type is more flexible and fluid, bereft of an explicit performative verb in the first person singular, and escaping the explicit provision of felicity.

We cannot supply a neat set of conventions that would secure the foundation of every possible protest that had happened in the past and will happen in future. But that does not mean that every protest-act starts anew – with radically new mechanisms and devices. A familiar background, a historical precedence should be there before we can launch a protest. This precedence from history, and its nature of being repeated, are what make a protest act a conventional act. At this juncture, it becomes important to understand the concepts of constatives and performatives that would lead to a way of applicability of these concepts.

### **Understanding Constatives and Performatives**

Austin distinguishes constatives from descriptions when he says that “not all true or false statements are descriptions, and for this reason I prefer to use the word constatives” (Austin p. 3). Constatives *constate* something, performatives, on the other hand “do not ‘describe’, or ‘report’ or *constate* anything at all; they are not true or false” (Austin 1962, p. 5). Constatives are those where the descriptive aspect is more pronounced and the actional aspect is toned down, whereas in performatives the reverse phenomenon

occurs. The distinction between constatives and performatives and the consequent blurring of that distinction gets a novel direction when illustrated in protests. This paper presents an honest attempt to reconstruct the constative dimension of protests and to show how the latter transits back to the performative dimension. It is an intellectual challenge to appreciate the tension between these two dimensions within the acts of protests.

For Austin, the distinction between constatives and performatives is not fundamental but aspectual. For example, he says when “we hurl a tomato in a political meeting or shout ‘I protest’; these actions have the consequence of making others aware of the fact that I protest, or that I hold certain political beliefs. But this does not make either the throw or the shout true or false.” In speech-acts in general, and in protest speech-acts in particular, the protestor does not state that he is protesting, that he has such and such reasons for performing the protest, or that he believes such and such to be the case as the ground of his protest. He simply plays a language-game or enacts his belief or reasons for protest in and through the act.

By introducing this new perspective of looking into the meaning theory through the concept of constatives and performatives, Austin himself shook the very foundations of language and thereby problematized its role to start a new theory of looking into the concept of meaning. This new approach chiefly consists in recasting language through a distinction between constative and performatives. In his later lecture (lecture XI), he seems to surrender all the attempts he had made earlier to distinguish these two categories. The same argument that he gave in the starting lectures to distinguish the two categories, later turned into a means of proving the non-distinction between the two categories. It seems that on a deeper analysis these two categories were found to have certain overlapping and crisscrossing features, which led him to displace their mutual conflict with a new conclusion. This new conclusion asserts that a statement (which is a constative) is as much a performative as a warning or an order is. He says that “it is essential to realize that ‘true’ and ‘false’ like ‘free’ and ‘unfree’ do not stand for anything simple at all. They stand only for a general dimension of being a right or proper thing to say as opposed to a wrong thing, in these circumstances, to this audience, for these purposes, and with these intentions” (Austin 1962



p. 145).

Austin points out that just as making a statement does not require an ostensibly robust movement of our motor organs (but only movements of our speech organ), similarly the other speech acts like warning, promising, naming – and protesting (Austin 1962, p. 133). Thus, for Austin protest acts may not be an aggressively fleshy movement of our motor organs.

That making statements are virtually performatives gets explicit in such remarks of Austin:

“In saying that it was raining, I was not betting or arguing or warning; but simply stating it as a fact.”

Again, more importantly –

“In saying that it was leading to unemployment, I was not warning or protesting; I was simply stating the facts” (Austin 1962, p.134).

This shows (with specific reference to protests) that the absence of any illocutionary force<sup>2</sup> or of exuberance is not an actual absence or a real plenitude. In the above utterances, their constative status is deliberately constructed by a conscious contrast with other performative counterparts. What seems to be a pure and original statement of fact is actually a strained exercise of deactivating the illocutionary force, which is itself an activity. The so-called constatives are always motivated by certain interests and needs; thus, they articulate a particular mode of narrating reality. Giving a bare, neutral narration is usually a very strained and effortful exercise. For example, a witness in the court is asked to concentrate only on what had happened minus his own imagination and cognitive background and to offer a pure description. But ironically this pure description is actually a construction of reality. It is loaded with certain ethical urges and social sensitivities. The ethical responsibility of helping the judicial system to find out the criminal, and a shared cognizance about the distinction between crime and innocence.

It is explained further by Austin that an utterance like “I state that he did not do it” is same as the utterances prefixed by ‘*I argue*’, ‘*I suggest*’, ‘*I bet*’ etc. (Austin 1962, p.134). To these we can very well add - ‘I protest

that he did not do it.’ Here again, we find that the apparent plitude of constatives is an active construction, not a real flatness or neutrality. The non-explicit forms of utterances like ‘He did not do it’; apparently shorn of all illocutionary force, have to be made explicit by fleshing them out in several illocutionary variations mentioned above.

Austin further argues that there is no clash between our producing of an utterance being a doing something versus it being true or false. This is because a speech act, be it of warning, betting or protesting, involves cognition, i.e., cognition of the objects or of the situation with which the speech act operates. It happens to be the case that often it is the truth-value of the cognition that comes to the forefront. Taking the symbol ‘□’ as a variable for different kinds of speech acts, we can say that ‘□ that he did not do it’ and ‘He did not do it’ are the same.

We can see how these theoretical concepts of Austin work when we attempt to apply it to the live protest situations. Some examples of protest-language have been taken from newspapers have been taken here:

1. “JNU students reject punishments, to go on hunger strike from today” (*The Hindu*, 27/04/2016).

This example shows the denial of judgment to punish some students, which was given by the University administration. It does not only include a denial, it further involves a next step of students in the form of hunger strike. Thus non-acceptance and hunger strike can be seen here as different forms of protest.

2. (i) “Writers protest ‘silence’ of Akademi” (*The Hindu* 12/10/15).
- (ii) “Kannada writer returns Akademi award” (*The Hindu* 16/10/15).
- (iii) “Shashi Deshpande quit Akademi council” (*The Hindu*, 10/10/2015).

These above-mentioned examples show a form of protest of the writers against certain inter-related issues – viz. the intolerance of government about the right to dissent, and against the not taking any action by the Sahitya Akademi over the murder of literary persons. In order to

protest, many award winning writers returned their awards and resigned from their post also, and this protest was also known by the name, “award wapsi”.

3. “TN farmers protest enters 15 days on March 28” (The Hindu, 29/03/2017).

This excerpt talks about Tamil Nadu farmers who had been protesting at Jantar-Mantar in New Delhi since March 14, 2017. The demands of the farmers of Tamil Nadu include a farm loan waiver and a drought relief package of Rs. 40,000 crore from the central government. The shockingly new thing in this protest that longed for forty-one days was that every day the farmers were applying new methods of protesting. These methods included eating mice, men wearing sarees, writing the demands on their own bodies, shaving their half beard and half hair, hunger strike, hanging noose in their neck and many more. And all this was being done in a way that their voice could reach the government. Almost all the methods adopted by the farmers were like tokens to reflect their situation which they were facing.

“Like all other speech-acts, a protest may not involve the use of words. As Austin says, saying words may be a necessary condition, but not a sufficient condition - and sometimes it may not even be a necessary condition. To take his own examples, one may marry by co-habiting, one may bet with a slot-machine. Similarly, protest-acts may not involve word-transactions - like the action of hurling tomatoes” (Austin 1962, p.111).

Referring to the different examples of protest that I have mentioned above, one can say that ‘I protest against the governmental inaction or silence against the murder of several writers is the same as ‘The government was inactive and silent against the murder of several writers’. In short, in the latter case the illocutionary force is underplayed, whereas in the former it is overplayed. This phenomenon of overplaying occurs when a statement like ‘I think he did it’ is rudely interpreted as a statement about the speaker himself (Austin 1962, p.135); or when an apparent statement of fact about the governmental inaction pertaining to the murder of writers is read as the speaker making a statement about his own protest act. In the latter mode of

reading, the performative is again seen as having the cognitive value of truth/falsity. Thus, it emerges that for Austin the *doing* aspect and the *truth/falsity* aspect of speech acts are the two aspects of the same action, they are not under the pressure of being in a neat mutual dichotomy or conflict.

At this stage when statements have been proved to be illocutionary acts<sup>3</sup> as well, then the criterion of being infelicitous should apply to them as well. Austin gives various examples to prove this claim. “The cat is on the mat, but I do not believe that it is” is a kind of example that shows the *insincerity* of the statement because at the moment we state that the cat is on the mat, we also have the belief that it is. Thus, when the belief component is missing it becomes an insincere statement in the same way as our saying that I promise to be there, but I do not intend to fulfill that promise - is insincere. Thus, for Austin a putative statement can commit the infelicity of being *null and void*.

For this reason, Austin emphasized the need to study an utterance not simply as a sentence alone, but as issued in a speech situation, and doing so, he says, will enable us to see that there is no difference between ‘stating’ and ‘performing an act’ (Austin 1962, p.139). What is pertinent for Austin here is to see the use of language in different speech contexts and situations, and that meaning of an utterance can be understood only after taking it in the contextual background and not in isolation. This possibility of looking at the meaning within the contextual purview can make it possible to see that a statement too is performing an act.

It is interesting to emphasize that merging the distinction between constative and performative enabled Austin to deduce that even a statement is an illocutionary act. And as it is essential for all illocutionary acts to invite a response or to ‘secure uptake<sup>4</sup>’, these features would essentially mark statements as well. The correspondence theory of truth and the referential theory of meaning conceived the relation between sentence and reality as autonomous. It is considered independent of the need of audience response or uptake. It is specially assuring to see Austin emphasizing this point about protests. He observes that it is doubtful whether I stated something if that statement was not heard by anybody, just as my warning or protesting against something sotto voce will not be worth their names if they are not understood

as warnings or protesting. The occasional cases where a statement does not invite a response are accidental ones, and bringing variant effects by utterances is essential to the performance of speech-acts themselves (Austin 1962, p.139).

Austin does acknowledge a strong impression that we have about performatives – the impression about their essentially lacking the crucial feature of truth/falsity which the constatives essentially possess. “We may feel that there is a dimension in which we judge, assess or appraise the constative utterance..... which does not arise with non-constative utterances” (Austin 1962, p.140). The relation of correspondence with facts which statements possess, is not on the same footing with ‘endorsing’, ‘confirming’ ‘reckoning’ – the range of expressions allotted to the class of performatives only. Given this perspective the protest-acts, though related with, and justifiable in the light of, certain objective scenarios, will essentially lack the feature of correspondence with facts, which a pure statement will essentially possess. But the problem that arises with the proposed disjuncture between constatives and performatives is this. There is an undeniable element of truth or falsity in *verdictives* like ‘*estimating*’, ‘*finding*’, and ‘*pronouncing*’, one has to talk about estimating rightly/wrongly, finding or pronouncing correcting /incorrectly (that one is guilty or that the batsman is out). There are also obvious parallels between inferring and arguing soundly on the one hand and stating truly on the other. Warnings, advising, praising, blaming are patently done as correct/incorrect (Austin 1962, p.141). And here we can add that similar remarks will apply to protests as well. It is perfectly pertinent to ask whether a protest act is correct/incorrect, proper/improper, or whether it is ‘in order’, whether ‘merited’ or not – and these questions are quite different from the question whether it is ‘opportune’ or ‘inopportune’ (Austin 1962, p.141). But this does not warrant us to say that “stating something as true represents a different class of appraisal than ‘*arguing soundly*’, ‘*advising well*’, or ‘*judging fairly*’ (Austin 1962, p.141).” We can add that stating truly/falsely is not categorically different from protesting properly/improperly. There is no rigid cleavage between truth/falsity on the one hand, and the soundness of arguments, merited-ness of blaming and propriety of protests.

Austin uses some pointed arguments and illustrations to break the purported objectivity of truth/falsity. His three examples of seeming constatives are well-known:

- (A) "France is hexagonal"
- (B) "Lord Raglan won the battle of Alma", and
- (C) "All swans are white" (Austin 1962, p.143-44).

All these utterances are effectively deployed to problematize the notion of objective truth-value. The crucial point is that facts are not ready-made entities that can smoothly coincide with statements. One cannot avoid the questions as to what would count as correspondence, or what would count as good evidence for making these statements, or what would count as they being 'fair'. And in this appraisal, a vast array of terms inevitably comes in, those that are typically present in the appraisal of performatives.

To take the statement 'France is hexagonal' Austin says that it is 'good enough' from the perspective of a 'top-ranking general, but not for the geographer'. Austin observes that "[i]t is a rough description; not a true or a false one" (Austin 1962, p.143). It suggests that it is a paradigm - a rough blueprint - setting a standard for true/false description, but not true or false itself. That it is a paradigm, and that the paradigm is fixed according to the intents and purposes of the speaker is itself not an object of the statement. The paradigms and the special norms of facts conforming to paradigms are themselves not constatives but are performatives. Thus, neither of (A), (B), and (C) can straightforwardly be said to be true/false, though all of them are constatives. In fine, all the three examples of the seeming constatives show that the thick layers of qualifications and presuppositions underlying a statement cannot themselves be made objects of statements. At this juncture, we can adequately appreciate Austin's observations about 'true' and 'false' as being dimensions and not real relations of correspondence (Austin 1962, p.145). 'True' and 'false' do not stand for real relations of plain correspondence between fact and language. They are paradigms, and just as paradigms of quantitative measurement - like length, breadth, and depth - cannot possibly stand for pure length, breadth and depth, nor can the paradigms of truth and falsity. The paradigm of length for instance operates through underplaying the breadth and depth, the paradigm of freedom consists

in underplaying the passions and dispositions. Similarly, the paradigm of truth operates through underplaying two features. Firstly, the opportune and the expedient and highlighting the sense of propriety, and secondly, abstracting from the illocutionary (and perlocutionary) aspects of speech acts at the cost of prioritizing the locutionary, which in its turn involves an over-simplified concept of correspondence.

This exercise aims at neutralizing specificities and privileging the general - i.e., “the ideal of what would be right to say in all circumstances, for any purpose to any audience etc.” (Austin 1962, p.146). The exercise of privileging the propriety over utility is shared between both constatives and performatives (like approving, blaming, protesting, etc.). It is the latter engagement in abstracting from the aspect of correspondence and highlighting the illocutionary force that marks out the performative from the constative. Thus, the difference between an apparently flat statement about a protestable situation and a protest act lies in two contrastive patterns of overplay and underplay.

Thus, it is understandable that Performative and constative are only two dimensions, not two exclusive categories for speech acts to fall into. As length and breadth are dimensions, so are truth and falsity – the two defining features of constatives. There is nothing like a pure length given as an ontological reality, rather it is just a direction or an orientation – say of the foot rule to discard the dimensions of breadth and depth and approximate the purportedly pure length. Similarly constative character or truth/falsity are dimensions which submerge the actional character of speech-acts and let themselves be put up in the forefront. Similarly there is nothing like a pure performative – it is again a dimension that emerges when their constative or descriptive dimension is submerged and the actional character is put up in the forefront.

#### **Notes & References:**

<sup>1</sup>Felicity conditions are the accepted conventional procedures, the conventional effects, the appropriateness of persons and circumstances, the exhaustive set of participants of the particular speech-act, and correct and complete execution of the conventions.

<sup>2</sup>Illocutionary force<sup>2</sup> is the intention with which the speaker produces the utterance.

<sup>3</sup>Illocutionary act is the utterance with a force or intention, and perlocutionary act is how the utterance is received by the hearer.

<sup>4</sup>Securing uptake is securing understanding of the illocutionary force which is an essential element of generating the illocutionary act.

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# Ethical Challenges in Research amidst the Rise of Artificial Intelligence

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## Abstract

The recent development in the technological industry has started to change the direction of education, especially in academic research. It brings so many notable changes in the domain of the education system, which expands the boundaries of the teaching-learning method. The unique fruits of technological advancements, like artificial intelligence and big data algorithms, drastically impacted the research field/work. With the help of recent technological advancement, it becomes easy for a researcher to find a good amount of information across the globe concerning a particular research problem. Not only that, various artificial-based applications can even write a dissertation paper for a researcher. Such excessive involvement, use, and dependence upon modern technology during research pose new moral challenges in the research domain. This article tries to address and analyze those moral challenges from a philosophical point of view and find a possible way to deal with those challenges.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** *artificial intelligence; big-data algorithms; research; technology; education; moral*

## Introduction

Modern technological advancement has made a significant impact on the world of humans. It brings certain changes in the life and work patterns of human beings. It provides several new mediums that shape human communication modalities. Such new technological inventions made many things better and more accessible. The traces of such better improvement can be seen in almost every sphere of human civilization, like defense

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systems, transport, and education. However, the amount of service provided by modern technology in academics is phenomenal and incomparable. We have seen the power of recent technological advancement during the COVID pandemic when all academic institutions were compelled to shut the door of knowledge; modern technology then shows its ability to keep the flow of knowledge in the human world. It provides us with various online platforms and virtual tools like, Google meet, Zoom, Virtual Blackboard etc. through which the exchange of knowledge becomes possible in human civilization. People like us who have very little knowledge about the technological advancement and function of different gadgets become efficient enough to run the different technological programs in a short span of time. This is possible only because of the simplicity and user-friendliness of various applications. With the blessing of recent technological advancement, we need to spend very little time and energy to run this. The automation system of different apps minimizes our physical and intellectual labor to run such innovative apps. These applications are so systematically organized that they reduce all our tension and anxiety while doing any activity on virtual platforms. The automation system of different technological industries makes their search engines so efficient that they almost provide us with everything that we regularly want to search for. People like us become astonished at how it could become possible.

It has become possible through recent technological inventions like Artificial Intelligence (A.I.), Big Data Algorithms, etc. The deep learning process of the machines makes Artificial Intelligence so powerful and efficient that it can perform any earlier activity by the human mind. Recent Artificial Intelligence-based programs like ChatGpt search according to our command and summaries the essence of our search. It seems that someone has read all the available documents on a particular topic and then written a summary. If anyone has no idea about this, then he/she may completely fail to understand that it is the work of a machine and not a human mind. The most important thing is that a program like ChatGpt never repeats anything. That means if we put a single topic several times in its search engine and command it to write a summary on it, then surprisingly, it will write a new summary every single time. It seems that several people have written different summaries.

No doubt, such technological advancements minimize our intellectual and physical labor in the way of study and research. However, besides such benefits, specific questions are also circulated around the academic world, especially in the research world, concerning the excessive use and involvement of such technological advancement. Suppose we become habituated to using programs like ChatGpt and many other similar tools to write our research paper in absolute terms. Then, what would the role of the human mind be during research? Does the excessive involvement of machine work enhance the quality of research and life of human beings? Does such habitual action not open up the possibility of reducing the degree of human engagement in research work? Does artificial intelligence bring more quality fruits than human intelligence in research? Is it right to follow the machines blindly?

The recent picture across the globe, where modern technological advancements are almost about to start replacing human involvement in academic institutions from many perspective, forces us to analyze and address these questions with the intention of finding a possible solution. This article aims to find a possible answer to these questions. The sole intention of this article is to find out certain ways through which we can utilize the benefits of innovative technological inventions like artificial intelligence in the field of research in such a way which makes the progress of the individual self and society possible.

### **The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Research**

Modern technology is one of the most outstanding achievements of the human mind. Technological inventions are always meant to make human actions smoother and more accessible. From the very beginning of human civilization, human consciousness has been inventing technological equipment which helps to restore human labor and energy so that humans can invest their extra energy and labor force in creative work, which ultimately enhances the quality of human life. The technological inventions of the last few decades, like wheels, carts, cars, airplanes, etc., are some of the finest examples of such performances. Such technological inventions provide great service in building an efficient and proper human civilization. The recent technological

experiments are now trying to reduce human energy and labor force and provide ideas and concepts for building the future human world, which was earlier done by the human mind. A comment from Alvin Toffler is worth mentioning here. He says, “It is vital to understand, moreover, that technological innovation does not merely combine and recombine machines and techniques. Important new machines do more than suggest or compel changes in other machines- they suggest novel solutions to social, philosophical, even personal problems. They alter man’s intellectual environment the way he thinks and look at the world”<sup>22</sup>.

Present technological inventions like artificial intelligence claim to perform those works that we solely think are the actions of the human mind, such as calculation, analysis, and even song and poetry writing, etc. The Big-Data Algorithm system and Deep Learning Process of the computers make artificial intelligence more robust these days. This unique fruit of technological innovation is also used to do certain heavy duties. Artificial Intelligence is being used in defense systems across the globe. The amount of human trust it has gained within a short span of time is shocking. Many governments do not think twice about involving artificial intelligence in protecting the nation from internal and external turmoil. Now, it also gains the trust of the authorities of different academic institutions worldwide. Almost all short- and large-scale academic institutions are now using artificial intelligence and automation technology to enhance the facilities and quality of education. The libraries of many renowned academic institutions are now run through an automation process. A scholar can access and download study materials from libraries of abroad. Such technological advancement opens up the scope for scholars to get acquainted with the work and ideas of many foreign scholars. Such dynamic use of modern technology no doubt helps to extend the boundaries of information of a researcher concerning any particular research problem. It could also bring certain changes to the thought pattern of the researcher.

Now, let us try to understand what ‘Research’ means in order to understand the impact of artificial intelligence in the field of research. Research in any discipline contains certain common features; some of them can be pointed out in the following way.

- i) Research in academics refers to the systematic understanding and analysis of a particular research problem in order to find a possible solution to the problem.
- ii) Research in academics not only tries to understand and analyze the research problem but also implicitly or explicitly showcases the potential power of the research findings, which can be used to develop social or individual life.
- iii) Research also involves certain ethical principles or guidelines; for example, researchers always remain truthful and honest during the research work. They should not copy any other's work.
- iv) Research is supposed to reveal a unique way to deal with the research problem that has not been reached earlier; in this sense, research should be innovative, etc.

A systematic and legitimate use of modern technology in the field of academics helps develop the academic environment. Big Data Algorithms and deep machine learning processes help the academic world to progress. Each and every academic institution now uses artificial intelligence in its resource building. The present development in artificial intelligence has drastically affected the field of research. It becomes quite easier to search anything for detailed information. Online encyclopedias are really helpful in restoring our energies and labor force. A single command may provide us with information about a particular topic. It helps us to get acquainted with research articles across the world. People often take the help of various artificial intelligence writing assistance application like, 'Ninjatech AI', 'Aithor' etc. to write their thesis. Recent experiments have taken AI to a much higher level, where it has started to provide us with ideas and concepts concerning any issue. As we mentioned earlier in the previous section of this article, the present version of ChatGpt can search for and summarize anything for us, and it can even write songs and poetry according to our command. The recent AI-based technology's power is so immense that it can even create a song or poetry according to your preference. Yuval Noah Harari has pointed out the possibility of a function of modern technology in future. He says, "The next step is for the algorithm to start tinkering with

the songs and melodies themselves, changing them ever so slightly to fit your quirks. Perhaps you dislike a particular bit in an otherwise excellent song. The algorithm knows it because your heart skips a beat and your oxytocin levels drop slightly whenever you hear that annoying part. The algorithm could rewrite or edit out the offending notes. In the long run, the algorithm may learn to compose entire tunes, playing on human emotions as if they were a piano keyboard. Using your biometric data, the algorithms could even produce personalised melodies, which you alone in the entire universe would appreciate.”<sup>1</sup>

A perfect blend of traditional academic methods and modern technological advancement can bring a constructive change in the future of academics. Earlier, it wasn't easy to access the stories of different regions of the world. With the development of technological advancement, it has become so easy in the present day. Suppose we wish to know any primary information about the weather conditions of the Sahara desert by sitting in the remote district of West Bengal. In that case, we can do it only by searching it on our smart phones with the help of the internet. In a sense, modern technology opens up the door to infinite information about almost everything. However, such new productive powers of the machines bring specific challenges into the field of learning/research along with its benefits.

### **Moral Challenges**

Now, almost all of us have become habituated to search for the solution or answer to every single problem in our modern devices like smart phones or laptops, etc., instead of going or jumping into real situations with our intellect. Here comes the main challenge in the field of academics as well as in human society as a whole. If we observe very carefully, then it will not be difficult to understand how modern technological advancement in the field of academics makes certain peculiar changes in learners' behavioural and thought patterns. Such changes in behavioural and thought patterns really need some serious observation in order to understand the potential threat of such peculiar thought patterns in the near future of academics, especially in the field of research. Let us try to understand some of the changes in the behavioural patterns of the learners in order to understand the nature of such potential threats:

- i) Excessive dependence on machines brings certain drastic changes to our learning habits, vision power, moral behaviour and life as a whole. Learning is not a lifeless thing like a machine. It involves a conscious effort of the learner to grasp the essence of the object of learning. Such conscious effort helps to develop a sound mind which can understand the fruitfulness of the right knowledge and apply it in an appropriate situation. So, the slow and gradual learning procedure is designed to make us human. Our excessive dependence upon the machine during the learning period makes us unable to make a conscious effort. As a result, we fail to grasp the essence of the objects of learning. So, it may be possible that too much dependence on machines can make us a kind of machine in the near future. We may become stereotyped as machines. That means we may be unable to see an alternative to a given situation. A sound learning procedure generates habits within us to see beyond the surface of our perceptual world. It makes our vision a deep and analytical one.
- ii) It is not difficult to see how the unique productive power of recent technological advancement, especially in academics, provokes our desire to take dishonest means during any research work. In today's time, a smart computer, with the help of the internet, can do this sort of research thesis on any topic in less than an hour. The machine-generated dissertation can be an innovative one. That means it can provide us with completely new information on any topic. It could give a plagiarism-free thesis. Machines can access and compare more information than a human mind can do regarding any topic. The big techno industries have already built a strong data bank where hardly anything can't be found. The newly designed software can easily access this data bank and produce a well-articulated research paper on almost any topic. So previously, the human mind needed to endure lots of hardship during research work to collect data and other research-oriented materials. In order to avoid a certain degree of mental and physical hardship, we often use this new technological advancement for our research work. Sometimes, our growing trust and dependence on machines make us so lazy and dishonest towards

our research work that we try to showcase the writing of the machine as the writings of our own. Research is supposed to be innovative. There is no question of doubt. Research on any topic or any given situation should provide us with certain unique information about the concerned research topic. It should be authentic and free from any plagiarism. Scholarly research intends to do many things. For example, scholastic research always intends to change the stereotypical mindset of society over any particular topic. Many people say that it is not possible because various plagiarism laws have been developed to stop such unethical practices. However, there are still many controversies regarding this issue. Many applications have also been developed to escape the matrix of anti-plagiarism software. However, people are using various online applications to write their research papers.

- iii) The assurance of minimum pain and effort in research work by machined-based artificial intelligence often makes us greedy and weak in the way of research. Sometimes, the mental pressure concerning the promotion in an academic career provokes a researcher to take refuge in the machine and surrender the argumentative moral self to artificial intelligence and big-data algorithms. At any cost, we want to secure our promotion. It makes us feeble to take on any new challenge in the field of research. It is probably impossible to stop someone from engaging in such unethical practices without developing a righteous moral self with the researcher. Now, governments are taking initiatives through different refresher courses concerning ideal research work in order to eliminate unethical tendencies and practices in the research world.
- iv) i) The continuous and excessive dependence on technological advancement instead of our intellect/ rational power can really make us deaf and dumb in the near future. We may gradually forget to use our intellect in real-time problems. If it happens, then it becomes really easier for someone to manipulate our life and energy force. The saddest part is that we are able to understand that others are constantly manipulating us with the help of machines, as we have dismantled



our own rational power only by not using it in any problematic situation. This habit indeed opens up the room for others to manipulate our lives. In this regard, a comment by Immanuel Kant is worthy to mention. He says, “Laziness and cowardice are the reasons why such a large portion of men, even when nature has long emancipated them from alien guidance, nevertheless gladly remain immature for life. For the same reasons, it is all too easy for others to set themselves up as their guardians. It is convenient to be immature!”<sup>iii</sup>

### **Philosophical Analysis**

Let's look very deeply into the challenges arising in the field of research work with the advancement of modern technology. We can realize that most of the problems are moral problems in nature which are solely connected with human moral behaviour. Thus, it is not the question of whether a machine's work could be detected as plagiarized. The most important question is whether it is right to depend unquestioningly upon machines rather than on our intellect. Is it right to copy a machine's work? Is it right to showcase the machine's work as our own? And the critical question is whether excessive dependence on machines fulfils the purpose of research. Many such questions can be raised in this situation. The answer to such questions can be found if we become able to understand the purpose of education in human life.

By nature, humans want to know, as they find knowledge to be one of the key factors for survival in this world and to improve their lives and society. Knowledge empowers humans to deal with hurdles in life and reality by developing their understanding and conceptual power. The growing knowledge of power always pushes humans to explore the unknown dimension of life and reality. The human mind is not involved in searching alone; it also engages itself to find a mechanism to restore and share all the major findings about life and reality so that it can help the maximum number of people enrich their lives and society. Possibly for that purpose, humans have developed a systematic pattern of a teaching-learning system, which means a systematic form of the education system which allows and inspires the learners to drive into the world of research concerning the various aspects of life and reality. Research is a conscious journey of the human mind. It

involves both the rational and emotional aspects of the human mind. During scholarly research, the researcher's mind travels through different conditions and situations to grasp the essence of the research findings. Such an act of research probably trained/conditioned the mind of a researcher to throw certain light upon the research problem to reveal a possible way to deal with the concerned research problem. Such a laborious journey of the human mind makes research work fruitful for the researcher and society as a whole. Honest and deep involvement with the research problem not only opens up different possible solutions and aspects before the consciousness of a researcher to overcome the concerned problem but also enriches the researcher's consciousness. Such enlightened consciousness can pass the essence of wisdom about certain aspects of life and reality to the next generation and also may find the essence of joy and satisfaction in the laborious research journey.

A machine can write a research dissertation for us concerning a particular research problem, but it could fail to enrich the status of our consciousness. Suppose Goutam Buddha got the knowledge of the 'Four Noble Truths' through the help of the internet, Google, ChatGpt, etc., in the 5th century B.C. Then, does this machine produce information that can make Gautama Buddha's consciousness an enlightened one? Probably not, as we can understand, we have to go through all the necessary conditions in real space and time to have such an understanding. We should remember that machines can only provide us with information, and they can also do all that is necessary for the field of research. But at the same time, we must remember that it is only a way to compromise with our inner growth. We should allow our brain and intellect to function during the research journey to make this growth possible.

### **Conclusion**

On the basis of the above discussion it can be said the presently, it is not possible to avoid the influence of modern technology in the field of academics. Indeed, it is not a good option. Mere avoidance of learning about the nature, scope, and uses of modern technology can also make us feeble from certain other perspectives. Our ignorance about the present

technological applications and programs may open up the scope for others to manipulate our day-to-day lives. In such circumstances Kantian Deontology could be a guiding star. Kantian Deontology could help us to sail dispassionately in the ocean of modern technology, so that our passion/desire may not make our rational eyes a blind one. As an ethical theory Deontology puts utmost importance not to the consequence of an voluntary action but to the action itself. It says that an action which is performed out of good will is morally a good action. Obviously every research is directed to secure a goal which would help to enrich human civilisation. But such goal can't be attained only by focusing on the goal itself rather it can be attained only through adopting a right, honest and just means. So, we should be very careful about the ways/methodologies of doing research.

By following Kantian Deontology it can be said that a researcher should focus not only on the results of the research work but at the same time should focus on the way how to learn the skills of doing research. Such an endeavor towards research work could help researchers to nourish their rational abilities and moral conscience. In the light of the Kantian deontology it can be said that a joint function of reason and sound moral conscience seems necessary during the research work. A sound moral conscience may help us to remain just, truthful and honest to our research work. Where as 'reason' may helps us to use the benefits of modern technology in our research work by shorting out the limits, disadvantages of it which could pose a threat to ideal research work. Such a joint work of reason and sound moral conscience may enable us to use modern technological advancement legitimately. A legitimate and careful use of technological advancement in any sphere of education can only help make our academic environment sound and healthy.

### **Notes & References**

<sup>1</sup> Future Shock, Alvin Toffler, Bantam Books, New York, 1971, p.29

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<sup>3</sup> I. Kant 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?' (pp. 54-61), *Cambridge Text in the History of Political Thought Kant Political Writing*, Cambridge, United Kingdom, p.54

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# Arjuna's Battle Abstention: Exploring the Motivations and Justifications

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## Abstract

The *Bhagavad Gītā* portrays Arjuna, a competent warrior, as going through a moral and existential crisis on the battlefield of *Kurukhetra*. Arjuna experiences a state of uncertainty during the battle, whereby he raises concerns over the moral implications of doing his duty and the ethical considerations associated with engaging in conflict.

Previous studies on the *Gītā* is focused on Krsna's philosophy about the self (*Ātman*) and its relationship to the Supreme Reality (*Brahman*). Studies also focus on different forms of *yoga*, or spiritual paths, as a means of attaining liberation (*moksa*). However, very few focused on Arjuna's dilemma, which is a symbolic representation of every individual's existential crisis.

This study explores Arjuna's intricate decision to abstain from engaging in combat to elucidate his underlying rationale and justifications. It delves into the cognitive, emotional, and ethical determinants that give rise to Arjuna's internal turmoil. It examines Arjuna's tangled web of connections between his values, family, society, and spirituality. The study also connects ancient literature with contemporary ethical discussion by analyzing Arjuna's decision to refrain from war. This is anticipated to foster philosophical discussion regarding morality, obligation, and higher values.

**Keywords:** *Arjuna; Bhagavad Gita; duty; ethical dilemma; Krishna*

## Introduction

The *Bhagavad Gītā* is a book of Sanskrit literature authored by Vedvyās. This book is more of a philosophical work than a religious one.

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Even if the word God is bracketed or removed from this literature, the inherent message of desireless action remains intact. It is sometimes referred to as *Gītōpanisad* as its content is in the form of verses. The knowledge of the *Gītā*<sup>1</sup> leads to the realization of all human aspirations. It comprises lessons on philosophy and ethics. The *Gītā* is widely acknowledged as a unique and universal treatise on the philosophy of life. It is considered as one of the triple texts *Prasthāna Trayī*, of which the other two are the *Upanisads* and the *Vedānta sūtras*<sup>2</sup>. The *Gītā* consists of eighteen chapters (25th to 42nd) of the *Bhīsmaparva* of the epic *Mahābhārata*.

The *Gītā* is considered to be the most significant part of the *Mahābhārata*. The *Kuruksetra* war constitutes the central event in the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Gītā* is set out on the field of the *Kuruksetra*. It is a poem of seven hundred verses, a dialogue between Kṛṣṇa, the great avatar of God, and Arjuna, the typical warrior-prince and man of action. Arjuna was a great fighter in the war and the most feared one by the opponents. Kṛṣṇa was on the side of the *Pāṇdavas* as Arjuna's charioteer, friend, and guide on all occasions. At the crucial moment, when the war was about to begin, Arjuna asked Kṛṣṇa to place the chariot amid both armies to enable him to see the fighters on both sides. From that point, the dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna starts. It is this dialogue, in which Kṛṣṇa counsels Arjuna on focused engagement (*yoga*), that constitutes the *Gītā*.

By analyzing the *Gītā*, the primary text that narrates this episode, one can delve into the complex interplay of factors that influenced Arjuna's choice. These include his familial ties, his moral qualms about inflicting violence on his kin, and his spiritual doubts about the nature of existence and the purpose of life. An analysis of the *Gītā*'s dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna will uncover the deeper philosophical truths that lie beneath the surface of this seemingly simple narrative. This exploration will not only shed light on the character of Arjuna and the broader context of the *Mahābhārata* but also offer valuable insights into the enduring human struggle with morality, duty, and the complexities of interpersonal relationships. By understanding the reasons behind Arjuna's decision, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the universal themes that continue to resonate with mankind. Arjuna's refusal

to fight in the *Kuruksetra* war has been a subject of intense scholarly inquiry and spiritual reflection for centuries. This paper explores the ethical and spiritual dimensions of his dilemma and the multifaceted motivations and justifications underpinning Arjuna's decision to abstain from battle.

We now discuss Arjuna's reasons for unwillingness to fight the battle, as well as Krsna's philosophical counseling.

### **Motivations Behind Abstention: Moral, Ethical, and Personal Factors**

Arjuna's decision to abstain from the *Kuruksetra* battle is a central and poignant moment in the *Mahābhārata*, driven by a profound internal conflict shaped by moral, ethical, and personal considerations. The first chapter of the *Gītā* consists of the battlefield's description and the warriors' feelings and emotions. Duryodhana compared the strength of the armies of both sides. Duryodhana was overwhelmed by pride and joy on seeing the great warriors like Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Kripa, Aśvatthāmā, and many other heroes who stood by his side. On the other hand, Arjuna was overcome with great compassion on seeing his teacher Drona, grandfather Bhishma, uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, companions, and friends on both sides standing arrayed. Being an experienced and expert fighter, Arjuna visualizes that if the war is fought, many close relatives and elders are likely to die — a profound aversion against fighting the war aroused in him, which overpowered his will to fight. Arjuna wanted to abjure from killing anyone. Arjuna uttered in sadness that on seeing his people arrayed and eager to fight, his limbs quail, his mouth goes dry, his body shakes, his hair stands on end, his skin burns all over, and he is not able to stand steady, his mind is reeling, and his *Pandava* slips from his hand<sup>3</sup>. Finally, Arjuna declares that he does not long for victory, kingdom, or pleasures because he cannot kill his relatives in the battle. Consequently, Arjuna tells Krsna that he does not want to fight.

The reasons cited by Arjuna for not fighting the war are -

1. One wants comforts and luxuries for one's own people or relatives. So how can one fight or risk their life to achieve those things? For whom he wanted the kingdom and enjoyment are themselves standing in the battle<sup>4</sup>. There is no surety of their lives.
2. How can a wise person knowingly make such destruction? It is wrong to destroy a family<sup>5</sup>.

3. Arjuna was worried about performing rituals to the forefathers if a family was destroyed<sup>6</sup>.
4. When a family is destroyed, it creates confusion of varnas, and the immemorial laws of the caste and the family are destroyed<sup>7</sup>.
5. Arjuna was also confused about the victory of which party was better<sup>8</sup>? Perhaps because both parties are stained with good and evil. Neither one is black nor white.

Arjuna's ethical struggle arises from the battlefield, where he is confronted with the reality of fighting against his relatives, revered teachers, and close friends. The *Kauravas*, his cousins, include figures like Duryodhana, Dronacharya, and Bhishma—individuals he holds in high regard. This scenario challenges the conventional understanding of duty in warfare, raising questions about the righteousness of battling those to whom he owes respect and allegiance. Ethically, he grappled with the idea of fighting against his kin, teachers, and friends. The conflict here is not just strategic but deeply rooted in the bonds of kinship and mentorship.

Arjuna's complex dilemma suggests that as a *Ksatriya*, Arjuna is obligated to uphold justice and fight for righteousness, regardless of personal attachments. However, his duty as a family member clashes with this warrior code, as he is pitted against those he is bound to protect and honor. This clash of duties adds a layer of complexity to Arjuna's decision, highlighting the intricate interplay between societal expectations and personal relationships in the ancient Indian societal framework. Krsna's guidance invokes an ethical obligation to perform the duty of a *Ksatriya* that may include acts of violence when necessary. Arjuna's context required him to engage in violent acts for a 'greater good' that was required at the time as a duty to society.

Arjuna's dilemma is reconciled by the ethics of *Niskamakarma*, which suggests one should perform one's duty without any attachment to the result that the action might produce.

The concept of a just war is significant in Arjuna's ethical deliberation. He questions whether the cause of the war justifies the means, reflecting on the devastation that will ensue. This highlights the tension between the obligations of a warrior and the moral implications of causing harm to one's own people.



Arjuna's moral dilemma arose from his concern regarding the consequences of actions, which implies, in principle, that war is wrong. Arjuna's argument strongly opposes the act of killing. Arjuna is acutely aware of the potential repercussions of his actions. His concern extends beyond the battlefield to the moral and spiritual degradation that might arise from killing his kin, which could lead to societal chaos and the erosion of moral values.

Arjuna's personal turmoil is palpable as he grapples with the emotional toll of envisioning the consequences of the battle. His empathy and love for his family and friends transcend the boundaries of duty, making him question the very purpose of victory if achieved through sacrificing his closest relationships. Personally, Arjuna faced emotional turmoil, questioning the worthiness of victory stained with the blood of loved ones. The emotional weight of the impending loss and devastation tugs at his conscience, making the decision to engage in the battle a profoundly personal one. Arjuna's internal struggle humanizes him, emphasizing the universal theme of grappling with the emotional cost of difficult decisions.

Arjuna, thus stricken with the weakness of sentimental pity and his mind bewildered about his duty, asks Kṛṣṇa which is better<sup>9</sup>. That means he was torn between whether to fight the war or become a recluse and not fight. The *Mahābhārata*, through Arjuna's internal conflict, offers a nuanced exploration of ethical decision-making. It does not present a simplistic choice between right and wrong but delves into the complexity of navigating conflicting values and duties. Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna's dialogue, as explained in the *Gītā*, becomes a philosophical discourse on duty, righteousness, and the challenges of moral decision-making. This narrative device enlightens one to contemplate the intricacies of ethical choices, transcending the immediate context of the epic and resonating with broader philosophical discussions on morality and duty. The dialogues uttered by Kṛṣṇa to convince Arjuna to perform his duty led to the following arguments.

A criticism arises at the point of Kṛṣṇa's asking Arjuna to fight the war who does not want to fight is; 'Is the *Gītā* encouraging violence?' This criticism can be ruled out by saying that Arjuna's unwillingness or

disinclination to fight is not because of any moral conviction that causing violence by killing anyone is wrong because previously, he had been engaged in wars and killed people. However, this time, he hesitated because his relatives were engaged in fighting, which is very clear from the reasons Arjuna cited above for not fighting. By asking Arjuna to fight Kṛṣṇa is conveying the message that one should get rid of one's selfishness while performing duty. Someone is dear to us, and someone is not. Due to this, we cannot treat all people equally. The influence of selfishness makes our actions and decisions unjustified. While performing an action, one should only discriminate between *karma* (permissible actions) and *vikarma* (non-permissible actions). Moreover, between the two, one should always choose *karma* and avoid *vikarma*. So here, Kṛṣṇa cannot be accused of encouraging Arjuna to fight because Arjuna had already fought many wars.

Kṛṣṇa said that there are twofold ways of life: the path of knowledge for men of contemplation and that of works for men of action<sup>10</sup> (*Gītā* III:3) *loke'smin dvi-vidhā nishmā purāproktā mayānagha*. Radhakrishnan explained that the path of knowledge is for those whose inner being is towards deep spiritual contemplation, and the *yoga* of action for energetic personalities with the love of action<sup>11</sup>. However, there exists no work that needs to be done by the man whose delight is in the self alone or who is content or satisfied with the self<sup>12</sup>. However, one should always perform the work that has to be done. Man attains to the highest by doing work without attachment<sup>13</sup>. One can achieve perfection by work. According to the *Gītā*, renunciation (*sankhya*) and practice of works (*yoga*) are the same. One who applies himself well with one gets the fruit of both<sup>14</sup>. Renunciation is difficult to attain without *yoga* (works). The one who is earnest in *yoga* (the way of works) attains soon to the Absolute<sup>15</sup>. To be a *sanyāsī* or *yogī*, one must do the work he ought to do without seeking its fruit. One who performs no rites is not a *sanyāsī* or *yogī*<sup>16</sup>. Renunciation of work is not at all encouraged in the *Gītā*. So, it should be understood that Arjuna should do his duty of fighting.

Kṛṣṇa's persuaded Arjuna to fight also because the *Kauravas* did not accept the other options of peaceful negotiations to avoid the war. According to Śāṅkara an action is wrong or faulty only when performed, while other

courses that are not wrong are open and would as easily save one's life<sup>17</sup>.

Again, the lessons that Kṛṣṇa gave to Arjuna were not for fighting but were to teach him the metaphysical distinction between self (*jīva*) and body, which is of the eternity of the self and the mortality of the body. The body will perish, but the soul will enter into a new body and continue its existence. So wise people do not lament for the body. As the body is sure to perish one day, so without worrying for the body, Kṛṣṇa asked Arjuna to fight<sup>18</sup>. Kṛṣṇa again said that there is no more significant duty for a *ksatriya* than a battle enjoined by duty<sup>19</sup> (*Gītā* II:31) *swa-dharmam api shāvek chya na vikampitum arhasi*. Such a war for the *ksatriyas* is an open door to heaven<sup>20</sup>. If Arjuna does not fight in the battle, he will fail in his duty and incur sin<sup>21</sup>. Arjuna's fame will be lost forever, and people will think he is abstaining from battle out of fear and make fun of him<sup>22</sup>. If Arjuna treats pleasure, pain, gain, loss, victory, and defeat alike, he will never incur sin<sup>23</sup>. Action should be performed by abandoning attachment to success and failure with an even mind. Evenness of mind is called *yoga*<sup>24</sup>. All individual souls are a part of the absolute soul, so there is no difference between the souls of one's relatives and strangers. Therefore, one should perform desireless actions. The *Gñtā* is concerned with only the method of performance of action. Regarding what actions are to be performed, the *Gītā* says that one should act according to the scriptures<sup>25</sup>. Scriptures are the authority that tells a person what to do and what not. It taught permissible actions (*karma*) and prohibited actions (*vikarma*).

Generally, actions are performed with some purpose or intention to achieve something positive or negative. That means an action 'y' is done to obtain 'x' or get rid of 'x'. However, the *Gītā* asks to act without any desire for the fruit of the action. Such actions are also called desireless actions. The *Gītā* termed desireless action as 'goodness', which is ordained, free from attachment, and done without love or hatred by one not desirous of the fruit<sup>26</sup>. It is not a particular action but a method of performing all actions. The concept of desireless action does not help one know what to do. It is so because knowing that something is not wrong if done in a specific manner is not the same as knowing what is right to do.

Again, action such as *vikarma* undertaken from delusion, without regard for the consequence, loss, injury, and ability, is said to be of ‘dullness’<sup>27</sup> (*Gītā* XVIII:25) *anubandhai mkshaya mhinsāmanapekshya cha paurucham mohādārabhyate karma yat tat tāmasamu chyate*. There may arise a question that some features of *vikarma* are similar to desireless action advocated to be performed by the *Gītā*. In the *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna to perform work without considering the consequence, loss, or injury resulting from the action because one can only control one’s action and not the result. In *vikarma*, work is also done without any consideration. However, it can be said that regarding Kṛṣṇa’s advice of desireless action, one is not allowed to perform prohibited work. Instead, one is asked to perform his duty according to the scriptures. No scripture asks one to do anti-social works.

In our everyday lives, we face innumerable situations when we have to decide which way to act. The scriptures cannot cover each situation of our life. One’s consciousness knows what is right or wrong. Though one is aware of what is right or wrong, one does not choose to act always in the proper manner due to one’s nature, which is determined by one’s *gunas*. The *gunas* of a person determines his nature and character. Character fixes a person’s course of action. So the *Gītā* asks one to rise above one’s nature, i.e., to become *gunātīt*. That means one should not be swayed by one’s desires or affection but remain unaffected by external things such as desires, pleasures, etc.

The *Gītā* also underscores the significance of rational dialogue and moral reflection while choosing or making a decision, highlighting the importance of critical inquiry and reflexivity in navigating ethical dilemmas. Arjuna’s journey, steeped in myth and religious symbolism, exemplifies the transformative power of moral reasoning and spiritual insight. Arjuna’s journey enlightens us to contemplate the interconnectedness of duty and virtue, as well as action and consequence. Through introspection and dialogue, Arjuna confronts his ethical responsibilities and attains moral clarity, transcending his initial doubts and uncertainties.

By exploring the intersections between mythic narrative and philosophical discourse, we gain a deeper understanding of the ethical

dimensions of human experience and the enduring quest for moral truth and enlightenment. Arjuna's journey of moral decision-making holds significant implications for ethical theory and practice. In navigating the complexities of ethical decision-making, one can be guided by the wisdom of diverse philosophical traditions, forging a shared vision of ethical responsibility and moral solidarity in the pursuit of a more just and compassionate society.

### **Conclusion**

This study revealed that the *Gītā*, set within the *Mahābhārata*, presented Arjuna's inner conflict about his duty as a warrior fighting in a battle guided by Kṛṣṇa, an incarnation of Vishnu. As his charioteer, Kṛṣṇa, urged him to fulfill his warrior duty (*ksatriya dharma*) despite Arjuna's hesitation due to the moral weight of killing his kin and its consequences, reflecting consequentialist ethics, where actions were judged by their outcomes. Kṛṣṇa advocated a duty-based, deontological approach, emphasizing that actions should follow moral principles regardless of consequences. Kṛṣṇa also stressed the impermanence of the body and the soul's eternal nature, encouraging Arjuna to act without attachment to results.

The paper also suggested that Arjuna's dilemma can be understood through communicative rationality, which values open, rational dialogue for moral reasoning. Kṛṣṇa's discourse prompted Arjuna to rethink his motivations, focusing on the broader implications of his actions. The conversation reflects duty, virtue, and ethical reasoning, with Arjuna's journey illustrating the transformative power of moral reflection and spiritual growth.

While the reasoned communication analyzed from the conversation between Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa is not exhaustive, it opens a new dimension to explore the teachings of the *Gītā* in mitigating dilemmas or moral conflicts that arise in one's life.

### **Notes & References**

<sup>1</sup> "The Upaniṣad sung, that is, told by the Blessed Lord" is conveyed, in Sanskrit, by the expression *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā Upaniṣad*. The two singular words *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā* and *Upaniṣad* have at first been changed into *Bhagavad Gītā* and later on merely *Gītā*. *Bhagavad Gītā Rahasya*, R.B. Tilak, vol. 1, Poona 1935, p.4.

The prefix, *Śrīmad*, is normally used for some of the later sacred texts in Hinduism, signifying utmost respect given to them. *Gītā* is the name given to those books which contain spiritual knowledge. While *Gītā* popularly refers only to *Bhagavad Gītā* there are many '*Gītā*' in Indian literature.

<sup>2</sup>*The Bhagavad Gita and the Changing World*, P.N. Rao, Ahmedabad 1953, p.49.

<sup>3</sup>*The Bhagavad Gītā*, S. Radhakrishnan, 2nd ed. Noida India 2014, pp 100-101.

<sup>4</sup>(*Gītā* I.33) *yechāmarthe kānkchitam no rājyam bhogāh sukhāni cha ta ime 'vasthitā yuddhe prānāms tyaktvā dhanāni cha.*

<sup>5</sup>(*Gītā*I:39) *kathaAnajñeyamas mābhīhpāpādasmān nivartitum kula-kchaya-kritam docham prapaśhyadbhir janārdana*

<sup>6</sup>(*Gītā* I:42) *saEkaronarakāyaiva kula-ghnānāA kulasya cha patanti pitaro hy echām lupta-piGodaka-kriyāh.*

<sup>7</sup>(*Gītā* I:43) *dochair etaih kula-ghnānām varna-sankara-kārakaih utsādyante jāti-dharmāh kula-dharmāśh cha śhāśhvatah*

<sup>8</sup>(*Gītā* II:6) *nachaitadvidmah kataranno garīyo yadvā jayema yadi vā no jayeyuh yāneva hatvā na jijīvichāmaste 'vasthitāh pramukhe dhārtarāchmrāh.*

<sup>9</sup>(*Gītā* II:7) *kārpanya-dochopahata-svabhāvah prichchhāmi tvām dharmasammūha-chetāhyach-chhreyah syānniśhchitam brūhi tanme śhichyaste ham śhādhi mām tvām prapannam.*

<sup>10</sup>(*Gītā* III:3) *loke 'smin dvi-vidhānichmhāpurāproktāmayānagha jñāna-yogenasānkhyānāA karma-yogenayoginām.*

<sup>11</sup>*The Bhagavad Gītā*, S. Radhakrishnan, 2nd ed. Noida India 2014, p.150.

<sup>12</sup>(*GGītā* III:17) *yastvātma-ratirevasyādātma-triptaśh cha mānavahātmanyeva cha santuchmastasyakāryaAnavidyate.*

<sup>13</sup>(*Gītā* III:19) *tasmādasaktahsatatamkāryam karma samāchara asaktohyācharan karma paramāpnotipūruchah.*

<sup>14</sup>(*Gītā* V:4) *sānkhyā-yogauprithagbālāhpravadantinapanditāh ekamapyāsthitahsamyagubhayorvindatephalam.*

<sup>15</sup>(*Gītā* V:6) *sannyāsastumahā-bāhodukhamāptumayogatahyoga-yuktomunir brahma nachire Gādhigachchhati.*

<sup>16</sup>(*Gītā* VI:1) *anāśhritah karma-phalamkāryam karma karotiyahsasannyāsī cha yogī cha naniragnirnachākriyah.*

<sup>17</sup>*The Principal Upanisads*, S. Radhakrishnan, Noida India 1953, p. 354.

<sup>18</sup>(*Gītā* II:18) *antavantaimedehānityasyoktāhśharīrinahanāśhino  
'prameyasya tasmādyudhyasvabhārata.*

<sup>19</sup>(*Gītā* II:31) *swa-dharmam api chāvekchyan avikampitumarhasi  
dharmyāddhiyuddhāchchhreyo 'nyatkchatriyasyanavidyate.*

<sup>20</sup>(*Gītā* II:32) *yadrichchhayāchopapannamswarga-dvāramapāvritam  
sukhinahkchatriyāhpārthalabhanteyuddhamīdriśham.*

<sup>21</sup>(*Gītā* II:33) *atha chet tvamim amdharma msargrāmam na karichyasi tatah  
sva-dharmamkīrtim cha hitvāpāpamavāpsyasi.*

<sup>22</sup>(*Gītā* II:35) *bhayād narāduparatam mansyantetvām mahā-rathāhyechām  
cha tvambahu-mato bhūtvāyāsya lāghavam.*

<sup>23</sup>(*Gītā* II:38) *sukha-dukkhe same kritvā lābhālābhau jayājayaut ato yuddhā  
yayujyasva naiv am pāpam avāpsyasi.*

<sup>24</sup>(*Gītā* II:48) *yoga-sthah kuru karmāmi sangamtyaktvā dhanañjaya siddhy-  
asiddhyoh samobhūtvā samatvam yoga uchyate.*

<sup>25</sup>(*Gītā* XVI:24) *tasmāch chhāstrampramānamte kāryākārya-vya vasthītau  
jñātvās hāstra-vidhānoktan karma kartum ihārhasi.*

<sup>26</sup>(*Gītā* XVIII:23) *niyatam sanga-rahitam arāga-dvechatah kritam aphala-  
prepsunā karma yat tat sāttvikam uchyate.*

<sup>27</sup>(*Gītā* XVIII:25)

*anubandham kchayam hinsām anapekchya cha paurucham mohād ārabhyate  
karma yat tat tāmasam uchyate.*



## **Kant on Universalizability: Some Observations**

**Prakash Mondal\***

### **Abstract**

The central or rather the ultimate aim of this article is twin: to establish Kant's principle of universalizability as a full-fledged criterion of morality, that is, a criterion by dint of which alone we can identify moral maxims as distinguished from the immoral ones, and to bring out the implications of this principle for us - humans. Two vital points that we should keep in mind throughout this paper are these. One, the familiar Kantian theme that morality is concerned with maxims. Although Kant sometimes speaks of moral evaluation of action, he intends this principle as a moral criterion basically for maxims of action. As he says, "Ethics does not give laws for action, but only for the maxims of action."<sup>1</sup> Secondly, Kant addresses this principle only to rational beings or, to be more realistic (though Kant does not himself explicitly say this), to any human being who is fully capable of rational deliberation. This has an important implication, namely, that Kant would admit that a person follows a maxim only if he deliberately sets out to act upon it. And unless a being is rational, he would have no skill at deliberative choice. Be it recalled also that Kant ties the possibility of morality to the possibility of acting not merely according to a principle but according to the idea or the conception of the principle.

**Keywords:** *formula of universal law; laws of nature; categorical imperative; maxim; rational being; agent; reason*

### **Introduction**

The principle of universalizability is famously embodied in Kant's first formula of the categorical imperative, that is, the Formula of the Universal

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Law. This formula would seem to reflect the central theme of Kant's moral theory. He vindicated that true morality could never afford to be non-universal or relative. The point is that my judgement that a given maxim is moral carries with it a certain normative force, not only for me, but for any human individual. For if my judgment is right, then it will be morally binding on me and others as well.

### **The Formula of the Universal Law**

Kant formulates the categorical imperative in a number of ways. He begins with the Formula of the Universal Law which may be regarded as the 'form' of the categorical imperative. This formula runs as "Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law."<sup>2</sup>

So, to ask whether I could will my maxim to be a universal law is to ask whether I could will that all others should be permitted to follow it. This formula thus asks me to act only upon that maxim which I can consistently will to be followed by everyone else. In brief, I ought to act upon that maxim which is universalizable no matter whether it is in fact followed by anyone else. Universalizability is the demand for consistency in the reasons people give in order to justify their normative claims. If there are valid reasons for my choosing a particular maxim as a moral one, then surely that maxim is worthily of anyone's desire. If this is denied, then we would have to admit that there are no genuine moral maxims and consequently we would have to simply forget about morality. Anyway, Kant offers two ways in which a maxim could be deemed universalizable.

A given maxim is universalizable if and only if it does not defeat its own purpose in case, it is universally followed. For example, if the maxim of verbal deception is followed by everyone, then no one would expect the truth from anyone else and hence no one could deceive anyone else by telling lies. So, this maxim would fail to fulfil its own purpose when it is in fact followed by everyone, and hence is not universalizable. The maxim 'I should lie' depends for its effectiveness upon the fact that it is not universal, that its theoretical correlate, 'I lie' is not universalizable into a judgement, 'All men always lie'; for, if it were, the assigned purpose of lying, i.e.,

deceiving others, could not be fulfilled. In short, universal verbal deception would render verbal deception itself ineffective, only if each recognizes what others tell as false. So, the maxim of verbal deception would destroy itself if made universal.

A given maxim is universalizable if and only if I can consistently will that it be followed by everyone, that is to say, if and only if in my very willing that the maxim be followed by everyone, I do also will that the maxim be not followed by everyone. Now I cannot consistently will that the maxim of verbal deception be followed by everyone, because, since no sensible person can will that he be deceived by others, I do not in my senses will that I be deceived by others. The reason why a rational person cannot will to universalize the maxim of verbal deception is simple: To will myself to befooled by others is to allow others to treat me as a person with disdain, thereby downgrading my status as a rational being. No rational being can will to demean his status as a rational being - this would clearly seem like the will contradicting itself. All this suggests that in willing to universalize the maxim of verbal deception, I exclude one "everyone" (i.e., my-self) from the class of everyone. This being so, in my very willing that the maxim of verbal deception be followed by everyone, I also will that it be not followed by everyone, that is, it be not followed by anyone toward myself. In other word, in willing to universalize the maxim of verbal deception I find myself committed simultaneously to willing that I not be verbally deceived and that I be verbally deceived. Now it is the essence of contradictory positions to annihilate one another. So, I cannot consistently will that this maxim be universally followed, and hence it is not universalizable.

In either of the above two versions, the Formula of the Universal Law shows that the only reason I can choose to verbally deceive anyone is that others will not do so - otherwise verbal deception would lose its point. This point is substantiated by the fact that if I observe my state of mind at the moment of a moral transgression, I shall find that I really do not will that my maxim should be a universal law; on the contrary, here my real will is that the opposite should remain a universal law. That is to say, here I just assume the liberty of making an exception in my own favour. Be it also noted that

the point here is not really that the social consequences of such a choice would be harmful, but that to universalize this practice, that is, to will that everyone do likewise, is either a practical impossibility (as in the first case: if everyone verbally deceives, nobody would be believed, thus rendering verbal deception practically impossible); or it renders the will a self-inconsistent one (as in the second case : if in order to will that everyone verbally deceive anyone else I also will that not everyone verbally deceive everyone else, then the very will itself becomes self-inconsistent, that is, becomes a logically impossible will.)<sup>3</sup>

The point of self-inconsistency needs a bit elaboration. Kant's essential idea is that I can will that a maxim be a universal law only if doing so does not involve me in a self-contradiction. The categorical imperative, as conceived of in this formula, is, as already said, formal; it is devoid of any content of will, that is, of what is being willed. This is exactly analogous to the mode in which the logical principle of non-contradiction is formal. The principle of non-contradiction tells us not to assert a proposition together with its negation, no matter what is the content of that proposition. The categorical imperative, likewise, tells us not to will simultaneously a maxim and what negates it.

The upshot of all this is: No non-universalizable maxim is morally permitted. In contrast, all universalizable maxims are morally permitted.<sup>4</sup>It is sometimes urged that for Kant, all maxims are either obligatory or forbidden. But this is a mistake. The point would be clear if we begin with the question, how can I know that a maxim is such that I ought to act upon it? For one thing, not all morally permissible maxims are morally obligatory. For instance, the maxim, "While alone, sing", is morally permissible, since I, as a rational being, can consistently will it to be a universal practice so that the maxim is universalizable. But it would be odd enough to urge that everyone ought to sing, while alone. For, this would entail that if someone does not sing, while alone, then he commits a moral wrong - which is surely unacceptable. In fact, Kant has often been misinterpreted as suggesting that we are only to do what we are morally obligated to do, and that to do anything else is morally wrong. This would make anything that is not morally

obligatory morally wrong, so that all morally permitted actions would become morally obligatory - but this, as we have just seen, is not true. Guided by this kind of thinking, it is often supposed that Kant is refuted by showing that there are maxims which could be universalized but which do not obligate me.

This would however be a mistaken conclusion. It would be helpful to remember that Kant himself classifies actions into three kinds: (i) morally obligatory actions - that is, the actions that the categorical imperative commands; (ii) morally prohibited actions - that is, the actions that the categorical imperative forbids; and (iii) morally indifferent actions - that is, the actions that are neither commanded nor prohibited, but are merely permitted, by the categorical imperative.<sup>5</sup> Obviously, the former two sorts of actions need to be morally relevant, and not morally indifferent, actions. And Kant would urge, as I understand, that, strictly speaking, only morally relevant maxims are the proper objects of moral assessment. And if so, then we can maintain that if a morally relevant maxim is universalizable, we ought to act upon it; if not, we ought not to act upon it. This suggests the following.

If omitting or failing to do something is morally prohibited, then doing that thing is morally obligatory; if doing something is morally forbidden, then not doing it is morally required.<sup>6</sup> Both of these things are required by the Formula of the Universal Law. Other acts and omissions are simply morally permissible in that they do not contravene the Formula of the Universal Law.

By admitting morally indifferent actions Kant isolates himself from the “fantastically virtuous” man who “allows nothing to be morally indifferent (adiaphora) and strews all his steps with duties, as with mantraps; ...Fantastic virtue is a concern with petty details which, were it admitted into the doctrine of virtue, would turn the government of virtue into tyranny.”<sup>7</sup> “Never do anything which is not morally required” cannot be the slogan of Kantian morality, because Kant never claims that all our choices are to be based upon moral considerations - there may be acts which are morally neutral and are simply morally permissible.

It should be clear that morally permissible actions allow us to pursue our own private ends. Without such moral permissibility, no one can achieve his own personal ends through living his own life. This is why many of our moral obligations consist simply in leaving people alone to do their own thing, without interference, provided of course there is no moral transgression. Even pleasure and avoidance of pain, which are natural concerns of all humans, deserve value to the degree that people incorporate them into their morally permissible projects. This is why we cannot identify the pleasant with the good; a pleasant thing does not have a necessary relationship with the good. Anyway, what is noteworthy here is that Kant's acknowledgement of morally indifferent maxims may be seen as a retort to those critics who see symptoms of a morbid alienation in life-attitude in Kant's overall moral thoughts. Man's life comprises two realms.

On the one hand, there is an area of life wherein he is 'on duty', and on the other, there is an area in which he is 'off duty.' Kant's endorsement of morally indifferent maxims does justice to this obvious fact of human life.

It has sometimes been argued against Kant that even an immoral maxim may be shown to be universal. For instance, it is conceivable that a person, who is arguably sure that he would never be in need of other's help, may consistently will the maxim of not helping others in their need to be a universal practice. But on reflection, this observation would seem to be wrong. It must be recognized what exactly this maxim amounts to. The universalization of this maxim demands that I (or anyone else) should not seek others' help even when I do need the help of others and they can provide me with the help. In all likelihood, no sensible person would will this maxim to be a universal practice.

All this manifests an important dimension of Kantian morality, namely, that, though the supreme principle of morality is itself not a maxim, it is a test which is applicable to all maxims, without inconclusiveness. Any given maxim would either conform to the Formula of the Universal Law or not. There is no third possibility, and hence this procedure of testing the moral character of maxims is comprehensive. In other words, 'conformity to the Formula of the Universal Law' is necessary and sufficient for determining

the moral character of maxims and through them of actions of different types. A person whose action violates a morally relevant maxim which he can will to be a universal practice is acting morally wrongly. If the alleged action does not involve such violation, he acts morally rightly, or in case his action is morally neutral, it is morally permissible. In brief, this formula identifies some maxims as morally mandatory, some as morally forbidden, and some as simply morally allowed, and in this way, it covers all possible maxims.

It may be in order at this juncture to make an observation which brings out a point which often goes unnoticed in the discussion of Kant's moral philosophy. The point is that even as a necessary condition of morality, universalizability could succeed, though in a bit circuitous way, in identifying morally obligatory maxims, that is, the maxims which we ought to act on. Let me explain the point.

To say that universalizability is a necessary condition of morality is to say that a non-universalizable maxim is one on which we ought not to act, since no morally ought-maxim can fail to be universalizable.<sup>8</sup> Now if a given maxim is non-universalizable and hence we ought not to act on it, can we not conclude that its opposite maxim could be deemed one which we ought to act on? I think, we could say, yes. Consider the maxim of verbal deception once more." Being a morally relevant maxim, this maxim must be either morally obligatory or morally prohibited. Now we know that this maxim is morally prohibited. This being so, could we not argue that its exact opposite, namely, the maxim of verbal honesty, which is also a morally relevant maxim and hence must be either morally obligatory or morally prohibited, would be a morally obligatory maxim? I believe, we could. For one thing, the maxim of verbal honesty must be a maxim which we ought to act on, since its exact opposite, that is, the maxim of verbal deception, is not an ought-maxim.

Be that as it may, it needs to be noted that this formula can test the moral character of a given maxim, and cannot itself generate any moral or immoral maxim. The proposition that any maxim, if universalizable, is morally right does not of itself yield any material, particular maxim in this regard. To be sure, any maxim emerges out of an action that acquires a determinate

description by virtue of the terms in which it is defined by the agent; it is this settled description of the action that gives rise to a general maxim of which the action in question is an instance. So, to know a person's maxim is to know what he has incorporated into it, that is to say, what he has made the general standard in accordance with which he wants to behave. If we are given an elaborate description of a person's action without being given the maxim, we would not be in a position to pass any moral judgement. A maxim, then, is a subjective principle underlying a person's action. The characterization of a maxim can, in principle, be as specific as the subject pleases, but it must not be too specific to be applicable only to one individual; that is to say, it must be such that can range over other individuals too - or else it would lose its general character.

So, the Formula of the Universal Law is not to be expected to tell us exactly what maxims we should act upon; that is to say, this formula cannot entail moral conclusions just by itself. We have our own schemes of action, and the Formula of the Universal Law provides us with a method to evaluate them morally and determine whether they are simply morally permissible or morally required or forbidden. It should be clear, then, that the application of the Formula of the Universal Law to a maxim does not add anything to, or subtracts anything from, the content or matter of it; it only permits us to make a moral judgement about it. By the same token, it should also be clear that this formula does not include anything empirical. This formula itself is free of empirical considerations, but empirical elements enter in when we apply it.

One important implication of the Formula of the Universal Law is that the moral good or evil does not exist independently of the supreme principle of morality. In other words, the concept of good or evil is not defined prior to the supreme principle of morality, so that the former could not be regarded as the foundation of the latter; on the contrary, the concept of good or evil must be defined by means of the supreme principle of morality.

It should be clear from the above that the Formula of the Universal Law is a form of thought experiment aimed at subjecting the moral claim of given maxims to scrutiny, and hence needs no empirical survey. This being

so, this formula, as just said, does not contain any content within itself and hence is regarded as the form of the categorical imperative. It is crucial to recognize that although this formula renders the supreme principle of morality entirely formal, the principle does not thereby become entirely pointless, in that this principle is intended to be the crucial requirement of universality, and this requirement, in order to sustain itself, needs no empirical content.

A point of caution is in order here. This formula does not demand that roles, abilities, and circumstances are totally irrelevant to the specification of precisely what maxims are being acted upon. A maxim, as the subjective principle of action, is formed by the subject or the agent in question. A person's maxim comprises what he has incorporated in it, that is, what he has made the general rule in accordance with which he wills to behave. But, as already noted, if a maxim is so overgrown with qualifications that it fails to be a general norm, allowing only one action to conform to it, then it would, for Kant, not be a maxim at all. A maxim needs to be such that many actions of a certain type can conform to it. In brief, a maxim should be so devised that it could serve as a general principle of moral behaviour. Now if we are given a detailed description of a person's action without being given the maxim, the action in question could not be a proper object of moral assessment. It is necessary to recall that the application of the Formula of the Universal Law to a maxim does not add anything to the content of it; the formula only licenses us to make a moral judgement about it. This is why Kant leaves open how maxims are to be concretely framed. Kant's point is simply that the morality of a maxim is determined by its suitability for functioning as a universal norm, applicable not just to the willing of this particular agent here and now, but to that of any agent in a situation of the same general type. In simple words, a maxim can be morally right for an agent only if that same maxim is morally right for any other agent in similar circumstance. If I adopt any maxim as normatively valid for me, I at once recommend it to anyone else similarly circumstanced. No inequitable or arbitrary deviations for particular persons could be morally permissible, and hence this formula forbids exceptions in one's own favour. This shows that partiality or self-centeredness is unlikely to enter into Kant's moral theory at the most fundamental level. Moral agency must have to lose the privileged



status and hence must not make room for opportunism. We frequently appreciate moral individualism as a supreme right to our own moral views, yet hold others to be mistaken. Kant's principle of universalizability tends to block this opportunism.

Another point of caution is relevant here. When Kant argues for the universality of moral maxims, he is not denying that there are cultural, historical, and other variations of actual moralities. In other words, Kant does not claim that the same moral norms are in fact held by all, everywhere and always. Kant's point is that a norm of conduct could be deemed to be a moral norm only if it could be rationally willed to be a universal practice, having an unrestricted scope. Even I were the only person in the world to judge a norm or maxim as a moral one, I make a universal normative claim, that is to say, I must arguably consider it as valid for everyone. Here the claim is not that everyone will fall in with my judgement, but rather that everyone ought to agree with it. Here the crucial point is to ask myself, quite hypothetically, "What if everyone were to follow this maxim?" To answer that not everyone will do it would be pointless, since whether others in fact do follow this maxim is not considered relevant. All that I am required to do is, as already noted, merely to conduct a thought-experiment. My question is a formal one, a question of whether or not my willing the universal adherence to my maxim would yield a self-contradiction in my will. Recall that a great deal of moral wrong-doing involves the agent in an attempt to make an exception in his own interest to a maxim which, as applied to other agents, he accepts. This sort of tendency would lose its force if we seriously acknowledge that a moral maxim is not meant to affirm the supremacy of any particular individual, but to provide a standard moral norm for human conduct. Whenever I form and embrace a maxim as a moral maxim, I do so on behalf of every normal human adult.

Having ensured the universality of moral maxims, Kant proceeds to toughen the moral order and for this he puts forward an allied formula: "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a universal law of nature."<sup>9</sup> Here Kant asks us to follow a moral maxim as unflinchingly as possible. We cannot violate a law of nature. And we should treat moral maxims as if they are natural laws. When I will an immoral action, I will

according to the maxim of the act and also will - maybe tacitly- that my maxim not be universal. And such a maxim is not then analogous to a law of nature. Now the point of this formula is that I, and anyone for that matter, should follow a moral maxim in the manner that it is analogous to a law or nature. It is only in this way that we can bring about a disciplined moral order.

### **Upshot**

In upshot of this article, I want to make out the message which Kant's principle of universalizability would seem to convey to us. As I understand, the message, in a nutshell, is this: moral agency must have to lose any privileged status and hence must not overlap with opportunism.

Kant's principle of universalizability would then seem to have a deeply optimistic implication for peace and harmony in the precarious world in which we live. There is a great deal of anxiety in the contemporary world out interhuman antagonism which threatens to end up in global conflicts. since this threat is real, the need to do something to defeat this danger is urgent. Clearly enough, Kant's principle of universalizability can be of immense help in this regard. To understand this, it is crucial to realize that acting on the principle of universalizability amounts not to the mere fulfilment of the requirement of this principle as just a formal imperative, but to the adoption of a particular way of living with others. This way of living with others, as it should be obvious by now, requires one to refrain from lying to others, cheating, harming, or exploiting them, because these things are forbidden by the principle of universalizability, and also to help others in need if and when one can do so, to speak others the truth on appropriate occasions, because these things are required by the principle of universalizability. This shows that compatibility with the demands of interhuman morality is built into the principle of universalizability itself.

All this makes it clear - or so it seems to me - that living up to the requirements of the principle of universalizability would proceed to the emergence of a world of 'human comradeship' in which walls of distrust and contempt will crumble and in this way would tend to make our lives worthier by making it possible for us to live in greater harmony with one

another - that is, as true fellows of each other. Needless to say, to construct such a world is an arduous task. But then it should also be evident by now that in order to approach such a human community, it is mandatory to embrace the principle of universalizability with its full normative import. Viewed in this way, the idea embodied in Kant's principle of universalizability would seem to be a 'forward looking' rather than a 'backward looking' view. What is important is not what has happened in the past, but what we could make happen in the future through our acting on the principle of universalizability. If we fail to live by the principle of universalizability, we stand to lose the best thing this principle has to offer: the promise of a fundamentally better transformation of human mode of living. We can proceed toward such a transformation, that is, toward a future worthy of human dignity, only if we constantly remind ourselves that morality, as expressed in the principle of universalizability, is as such a matter of being a certain kind of person as it is of doing certain kinds of things. And this endeavour surely remains within human reach. Attending to this endeavour would seem to be required more today than ever, especially in view of the fact that there is often noticed in the modern psyche a desire for and a joy in degrading, tormenting and destroying others - which is why we live in a troubled, inequitable world.

The moral man, then, is the one who, through a struggle lasting his entire lifetime, responds positively to the call of the principle of universalizability, and if he really achieves something in this regard, however little, a great deal will have been done. There is no possibility of comprehending Kant's principle of universalizability at all deeply unless this redemptive idea is seen to lie at the core of it - or so it seems to me. This, I believe, is the most obvious and telling point that a Kantian can make in defence of the principle of universalizability, making us aware that the principle of universalizability centres on the task of converting ourselves from competitive and antagonistic beings into beings capable of uniting with one another on terms of mutual respect, and, therefore, that acting on this principle can take us a long way towards the human community sketched above. But then it is one thing to know how to cause moral progress of humanity, and another to actually struggle for it. Kant's principle of universalizability can thus be seen to be a demand to reconcile and integrate

a purely moral principle with our concern about the course of our living with each other. Clearly, this project of reconciliation is meant for each of us as moral agents. Now the option or the decision is ours.

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<sup>5</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *The metaphysics of morals*, op. cit., 377-78; 6:223.

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<sup>8</sup>Bandyopadhyay, Tirthanath. *Kantian Ethics* (Kolkata: EbangMushayera, 2010) 58.

<sup>9</sup> Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals*, op. cit., 73; 4:421.

<sup>10</sup>Bandyopadhyay, Tirthanath. 'Kant's Principle of Universalizability: Its Nature and Implications' in *Jadavpur Journal of Philosophy*- Vol-19 (Kolkata: Jadavpur University Press, 2009) 102.



# Love and Friendship in the Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle

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## Abstract

This research paper aims to examine whether the relation of love has any friendly character or if there is any relation between love and friendship. Friendship is a dyad, reciprocal and loving relationship. Love is the heart of any kind of relationship like friendship, and love has also a friendly character. Plato explores the causation of love or friendship in the context of utility. He warns us about the mad lover and he also tells us about the virtue of the mad lover. The friendship of Aristotle is fundamental, unique and the centre of all friendly relationships. Furthermore, he talks about the three classes of friendship and their usefulness in our daily lives. Self-love is the basis of any kind of relationship and it is the precondition of friendship. The practice of friendship has also a virtuous aspect which captures a space in this paper. Moreover, throughout the paper, I intend to analysis the philosophical aspects of friendship in the context of social life, political life and personal life.

**Keywords:** *friendship; mad lover; reciprocal relation; self-love ; character friendship*

## Introduction

In general, man wants to live very happily and pleasantly, even Aristotle also affirms this; for a happy and blessed life one has to live with others even if he is self-sufficient in every aspect, so a man cannot stay alone and if others is his friend, then it would be very interesting and very pleasant. A person can continuously be active only if he stays with his friend; he would be unable to share his feelings and thoughts with a stranger which is a very important factor for a man to continuously be active. For living a blessed

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and happy life, love has a significant role; loving each other is important in this issue. In *Lysis*, Plato talks about the factor that a person loves another only if he is profitable by him. He discussed the love, and relation between the lover and the beloved in his *Phaedrus*- which captured my interest. His discussion on the concept of honour of love, divine and earthly love in the *Symposium* will also assess this concern.

The main contention of this paper is to assess the various kinds of Aristotelian concepts of friendship and the impacts of love on these different forms of friendship. However, for this, at first, we need to appraise the concept of friendship itself and after that, we have to examine the relation and the influences between these two issues like love and friendship. In this context, the reciprocity relation is adjoined with the concept of love for each other. In a way, I would say that this could help in revisiting and reappraising Plato's and the Aristotelian notion of friendship, and the peculiarity in the relation between love and friendship.

### **Love, Friendship and Human Interaction: Plato**

Plato discusses friendship in the dialogue *Lysis*, *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* with the speech of his teacher Socrates. Plato explains his thought of friendship in various dialogues in different ways of discussion. He asks some questions about friendship, rather it would be better to say he asks some conditions of friendship in *Lysis*. He says that we love others for the benefit of mine, otherwise we stay outside of that. For explain this, he took the discussion between Socrates and Lysis about the love of Lysis' parent. Even Socrates does not hesitate to say Lysis that the very slaves have more liberty than him (Plato, 1891: 845). Because Socrates thinks that Lysis' freedom does not give his parent' any benefit. Socrates sought that a person will love him only if he causes good for him in return.

At the request of Lysias, Socrates asks Menexenus about the secret of friendship, as he has a friend. Socrates asks, when one man loves another, there which is the friend- he who loves or he who is loved; or both? In answer, Socrates also talks about different aspects i.e., the poets affirm that God brings like to like such as Homer and Philosophers assert that like is the friend of like such as Empedocles. The bad are not friends even if

they do not like themselves and for that, the good do not care about them. There is another view that likeness is a reason for aversion and unlikeness of love and friendship. They take the authority of poets and philosophers in support of their doctrines; for Hesiod Potter is jealous of Potter, bard of bard. Subtle doctors say that moist is the friend of dry hot or cold and the like.

He also mentions another facet that like is not the friend of like, nor unlike of unlike; and therefore, good is not the friend of good, nor evil of evil, nor good of evil, nor evil of good. What remains but that the indifferent, which is neither good nor evil, should be the friend of the good, or rather of the beautiful? (Plato, 1891: 846) But there is a question, how does *indifference* go with good or beautiful? When a body is suffering from a disease, then the indifferent becomes a friend of the good for recovering him. The philosopher or lover of wisdom stands in this intermediate *indifferent* position, here the philosopher is not wise and yet not unwise but he has ignorance accidentally clinging to him and he yearns for wisdom as the cure for the evil (Plato, 1891: 846). This way, we can see that if there were no evil, then there would be no friendship. This raised another question – is there present any desire to build up a friendship? And if we say yes, a person's desire is what he wants and what is congenial for him; then he desires a friend like him. We have already shown that like is not the friend of like and so on. This way, Socrates draws a picture of love and friendship and then concludes the discussion without any definition of friendship or cause for building up friendship.

In *Phaedrus*, Plato elaborates on the concept of love, the lover and the relationship with the beloved with the distinction between a friend and a lover with the tongue of Socrates. Socrates tells about the bad side of the mad lover and in the second conversation, he talks about the beauty of the mad lover. Phaedrus flourishes with the speech of Lysias and says like him in against of the mad lover that it is better to give your favours to someone who does not love you than to someone who does (Plato, 1891: 1056). Phaedrus continues his speech about Lysias' thoughts and argues that a lover is mad who is full of jealous, ambitious, easily angered and over-emotional. The friends do not keep score and will treat each other as an end

in their friendship. While the friend prays to lift him, the mad lover seeks to diminish him. Friendship could be setting up a non-erotic love among the members of a family. The lover desires someone, the friend deserves someone. The lover often insults his old love to delight the new one. He follows the beloved and engages in speaking about some affairs that occurred in the past or thinking. The non-lover speaks naturally and his motive is to build up a friendship or mere pleasure. Even if there is any inconsistency between the friends, they would quarrel but later settle with a mutual understanding. Non-lover's entry in love is the award of his merit; he may get more love out of his friendship with others. There is no guarantee whether the lovers will continue to be friends of the youth; whereas, the non-lovers who were always friends and the friendship will not be diminished. Hence, the favours should not be awarded to the lover only, as well as to those who deserve love. A person should give credit to those who will be his friends throughout his span of life, as the lover is more attached to passion, but the friends are more virtuous. Friends caution the lover under the idea that his way of life is bad.

However, Lysias' speech composed a foolish paradox and the effect that the non-lover ought to be accepted rather than the lover because he is more intellectual, more gentle, more enduring, less fishy, less harmful, less boastful, less engrossing and because there are more of them and for a great many other reasons which are equally unmeaning.

Socrates does not fully approve of this, but he agrees with Lysias and says in favour of the non-lover. A mad lover always desires only pleasure, but the friend pursues what is best. While these two desires conflict, then a person chooses what is best over mere pleasure. But in the case of the beloved, the lover always gives him what is most pleasurable over the truths of philosophy. In the case of the friend, the friend encourages his friend to 'improve his mind through divine philosophy' (Jha, 2010: 56). The friend tries to increase his friend's humanity, whereas the lover wants from his beloved that he is moving just around him and detach from other people. Besides, when the winds change and passion subsides, the lover breaks up his promise but the friend keeps the promise. Even Socrates warns Phaedrus that in the friendship of the lover, there is no kindness, what remains is only a craving



as if: As wolves love lambs so lovers love their loves (Plato, 1891: 1057). But Socrates tells about the favour of a mad lover in his second speech. He affirms that a mad lover has a mania for his beloved, at the same time he has raged for good which is derived from the divine and is superior to our self-control of irrational passions. The soul has two elements viz. the rational and the mad, they are compared with the *good horse* and the *bad horse*. An incarnated soul experiences earthly beauty. There is a pain between the conflicts of limited earthly beauty and supreme divine beauty. Despite experiencing the loving, the beautiful and the good with true love, the *bad horse* ends up with physical and unnatural pleasures. But the *true lover* is inspired by divine love and so the *good horse* always tries to sustain a solid bond.

An incarnated soul experiences the beauty in earth and there is a pain attached to the distinction between the supreme divine beauty and limited earth beauty. Most people end up succumbing to the generally resulting desire for physical and even unnatural pleasures rather than loving the beautiful and the good with true love. They disregard the truth and beauty of love, but while love is happening then it is filled with joy.

Love needs virtue. The lover pours divine inspiration 'into the soul of the one they love in order to help him take on as much of their own god's qualities as possible' (Jha, 2010: 56). Similarly, bad has no friendship with bad, but good is always friend with good. Now there is a paradox- the beloved is lifted to recognize beauty somewhat by, 'seeing himself in the lover as in a mirror' (Plato, 1997: 532), but the beloved continues to feel only friendship rather than love. By resisting the *bad horse* with modesty and reason, love and friendship can mount into Love. But it can also fall into a dilemma if it lets the *bad horse* and the animal's desires hold sway. In another way, choice is between philosophy which leads to the good and ambition which easily succumbs to the undisciplined desires. If it chooses the worst path, somewhere virtue remains in the soul and here, self-control is the main aim. If there is a better path i.e., that of heavenly joy, love and friendship, this is yet better than the 'human self-control' that it has used but transcended. It can be seen that Lysias situates the pair 'love vs. friendship', while Socrates establishes 'Love and friendship vs. the meagre love of the non-lover'.

The *Symposium* is more Greek both in style and subject, having a beauty 'as of a statue' than any other dialogue. Plato has written about the honour of love in this dialogue. Phaedrus, a young student of rhetoric discusses the antiquity of love and the benefits of love upon man. He also talks about the virtue of bravery of love and its consequences. The lover is ashamed by the beloved if he does any cowardly or mean act. In the case of true love, an individual such as the love of Alcestis was ready to die for her husband and as a reward for her virtue, she gave her husband's life. And in the case of Orpheus, the gods contrived his death as the penalty for his cowardliness. Pausanias distinguishes the heavenly love from the earthly and says about the two forms of love- the daughter of Uranus, the elder and wiser goddess who has no mother and the daughter of Zeus and Dione, who is popular and common. The first one, divine love delights only in the intelligent man, it has a noble purpose and is faithful to the end, and it has no shadow of lust. The second is the coarser kind of love- in that case, the body gets more priority than the soul. When the bloom of youth is over, the vulgar love is finished. But the first one is faithful and noble, so it lasts forever and it is also known as *platonic* love in general.

Eryximachus agrees with Pausanias to maintain two kinds of love but his art of describing led him to the conclusion that these two kind extend over all things, it is found in animals, plants as well as man. There are two loves in the human body also, the art of medicine decides which is good and which is bad love; the body accepts the good and rejects the bad and reconciles these two different elements to make them friends. He also states that every art, gymnastics, husbandry even medicine is the unification of opposites. For him, all sorts of diseases come from the excess or disorders of the element of love. The knowledge of the elements of love and disorders of the heavenly bodies is termed as astronomy and the relation of men towards gods and parents is known as divination. According to him, divination, which is influenced by people's inclinations toward impiety and piety, is how gods and humans can reconcile. That is the power of love and that is the source of all our happiness, friendship with the gods and vice versa.

Socrates does not give his own view rather he mentions the speech of Diotima when he asks her about love. She says love is not a mighty god or

fair rather it is neither it is a meaning between good and evil, fair and foul; not a god at all rather it is a great demon who conveys the prayers of men to the gods and men the commands of the gods (Plato, 1891: 1631). She says that love is the son of Plenty and Poverty. He is poor and squalid like his mother, lying on mats at doors; he is also bold and strong like his father and full of arts and resources. He is a means between ignorance and knowledge like the philosopher who is also a mean between the wise and the ignorant. She also states that love desires not only the good at the same time love desires an everlasting good and that's why all men are desirous of bringing to birth. Love is beauty as well as birth in beauty – this way people try to achieve immortality. She told Socrates that she would initiate him with greater mysteries, that is he who would proceed in due course should love first one fair form and then many and learn the connection about them; he should proceed from beautiful bodies to beautiful eyes. As the supreme being of love, he will behold the beauty with the eye of the mind, not with the eye of the body. In this manner, he will bring the real creations of virtue and wisdom so that be the companions of the heir of immortality and God. Then Socrates concludes his speech.

### **Friendship and Love in the Philosophy of Aristotle**

In the history of the philosophy of friendship, Aristotle first formulated a fundamental philosophical account of friendship. Like other ancient Greek philosophers, he also admits that the main goal of life is to live a eudaimonia life. For a blessed and happy life, we need virtuous friends. He argues that without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods (Aristotle, 2009: 142). Ancient Greece was the place where the philosopher's main target was to give the citizens a flourishing life. Man is essentially a relational rational animal and loves to spend a happy and healthy life. For a happy life, one needs to be active ever and enjoy the moment, but if he is alone then it would be not possible. Of course, one can be active always if he has a companion and if his companion is his friend (virtuous friend). Only a virtuous friend can give another friend beautiful company and a stress-less life.

Aristotle, in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, proposes three objects of love and three corresponding kinds of friendship viz. utility, pleasure and

virtue friendship. In utility friendship, the friends love each other merely for the goodwill that they take from each other, but they do not love each other for themselves. They only take care of others only for give back the utility which is mainly shown in the workplace. In a pleasure friendship, the friends love each other only for pleasant, not because of their character that men love ready-witted people. It is shown among young people. They live under the guidance of emotion what is pleasant to themselves and what is immediately before them. They fall in love and out of love very quickly. Virtue friendship is the bondage where the men are good and alike in virtue. He states that virtuous friendship is the best form of friendship, which is also known as perfect friendship and such friendship needs time and familiarity. Friends who love for utility, they want what is good for them always and in that nature of friendship, friendship is less important than the sake of something that they gave each other in their friendship. And that's why, there are no such deep concerns for each other. The pleasure friendship is also equally fleeting like utility friendship, as in that friendship the friends always want pleasant for themselves even from the friendship itself. In these cases, if a friend fails to give utility or pleasure to another friend then the friendship is dissolved very easily and they cease to love each other.

Besides, perfect friendship is built up between those people who are good in themselves and alike in virtue, they wish well each other not for any incidental quality but for their own nature. In that friendship, the friends both are good without any qualifications and useful to each other. Hence, their own and other activities are the same i.e., good and pleasurable to each other. Such a permanent friendship might be desirable where the all qualities that a friend should have met at a point. But such type of friendship is very infrequent as such men are rare and such friendship demands time spent together and familiarity also. But in utility and pleasure friendship, the utility or pleasure is more important than anything else, even their friendship. A friend looks for some utility or importance in his friend to sustain the friendship. So, these friendships are impermanent because at a time the friend fails to give the utility or pleasure to another friend. He also states that for the cause of utility or pleasure, even bad men can be friends with

each other or bad men to good men or neither bad nor good may be friends with any sort of person. But only good men can be friends in themselves for their character. The bad men sustain their relationship only if it has some advantages. The difference between the three types of friendship lies in that they value their friendship. So far as utility is concerned, we value the advantage that we can have from our dealing friend; in pleasure friendship, friends gain their pleasure from spending time together and in perfect friendship, we value our friend only for his own sake.

Aristotle recognizes a friendship as one involving mutual recognition of moral goodness. He addresses such type of friendship by phrases as such 'the friendship of people who are good and alike in virtue' or 'the friendship of good persons' (Cooper, 2013: 624). He calls this form of friendship a perfect type of friendship, as it fulfills all the characteristics that one reasonably expects a friendship to have. Aristotle confirms that good men or virtuous men, heroes of intellect and character could be building up such kind of perfect friendship. At the same time, ordinary people who are a mixture of some good and some bad qualities of character would not be able to set up such type of friendship, he says.

In his *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle agrees that the highest form of friendship is possible through mutual knowing of one another; that is possible only through spending time together. He also notes in *Nicomachean Ethics* that it is pleasant not just to live well but to perceive our living well, adding that the purpose of the happy man is to contemplate his own virtuous actions. Aristotle says, 'self-perception and self-knowledge are most desirable to everyone' (Veltman, 2004: 227). He states that we cannot perceive ourselves with the notion that we can perceive others; but at the same time, he also told in his *Magna Moralia* that to be a 'second self' or 'character friendship', self-knowledge is required to see the nature and attributes of the friend and a person of good character knows himself by contemplating his friends' action and vice versa. For him, we see others better than ourselves because we have a degree of objectivity about others that we lack about ourselves. This, we gain knowledge about ourselves and reveal ourselves to others.

Aristotle's self-knowledge argument faces a paradox if we take his premise concerning self-knowledge. To achieve self-knowledge by

contemplating our friends, we must already possess at least some self-knowledge. Unless, we know ourselves prior to contemplating our friends or prior to choosing our friends, we cannot know that our friends resemble ourselves. In that case, we cannot rely on the mirroring dimension of friendship to achieve self-knowledge. Kraut dissolves the paradox by drawing a distinction between knowing that we possess a certain virtue or characteristic and beholding the virtues or characteristics we possess.

This raises the question of whether friends of good character always closely resemble each other. It is not difficult to believe that affinity often draws friends to each other, but it is also the case that people cultivate friendships with others whom they do not closely resemble. In that case, knowing each other in friendship does not enable self-knowledge. In *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle notes that we can gain sight of some of our characteristics by contemplating one friend and other characteristics by contemplating other friends as groups of friends share salient characteristics with each other, in order to secure self-knowledge. He says, character friendship enables us to gain self-knowledge and by virtuous friendships, we can live a blessed life.

Aristotle claims that friendship is built up by self-love and he explains in his *Nicomachean Ethics* how self-love relates to the love of a friend:

1. A wishes for and affects the good of B, for B's sake.
2. A wishes for the existence and preservation of B.
3. A spends all or much of his time with B.
4. A chooses the same things as B.
5. A shares B's joys and sorrows.

Where A is a good man all of the above holds where A is substituted for B i.e., the good man is a friend of himself and he enjoys his life in his way. On the other face, where A is a bad man, A cannot be said to be a friend to himself. He does not do work for his own interest always, he sometimes regrets his own existence due to his inner conflicts. He is not comfortable spending time alone like a good man and he is unable to control

himself like a good man. This way, we can see that good men could be mirroring themselves in another good man just like another self and they build up their friendship-like bond with their own self. But in the case of a bad man, even though they are not friends with him because of his wickedness. The bad man aware of his wickedness and his wickedness is not motivated to be his own friend and even despises his own existence.

Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* by saying the definition of friendship states that friendship is a type of reciprocal well-wishing. He discusses various relations among the three kinds of friendship, and he also admits that there must be a proportion among these. He develops two types of reciprocation in his writing such as, 'reciprocation as exchange and dependence' and 'reciprocation as correspondence'. The correspondence reciprocity is a simple pairing or matching. In that case, the acknowledgment of goodwill is reciprocated in the sense that they are paired or correspond to each other, but there is no exchange as such and they are not dependent on each other. Besides, the exchange is thicker than correspondence and dependence as further thickening of exchange. Exchange without dependence is illustrated in gift-giving (Iribas & Smith, 2019: 7). In the deep sense, reciprocation has a relationship with dependence.

There is another face of friendship, the relation of the parties is not equal rather it is inequality viz. the relation between father to son or between the rulers to the subjects. At the same time, it is not true in the case of its opposite relation e.g., between the son to the father or the subjects to the rulers. In virtue, generally, all are treated equally; but in the case of love and friendship, it is not the same. In these relations, the parties never get the same from the other nor do they ought to seek it. Friendship is normally set up by equality and likeness to each other. Likeness can be seen basically among virtuous friends. In their friendship, they are alike and they neither do wrong to themselves nor to let their friends do so. The wicked men become friends with each other for a short time because they enjoy each other wickedness. A useful or pleasant friendship lasts longer as long as they provide advantages or enjoyment to each other. Utility friendship most easily exists between contraries such as between rich and poor, between learned and ignorant.

There are three kinds of friendship admitted by Aristotle and there are various forms of friendship among these friendships such as friendship between equal and friendship between superior and inferior. The friendship of equality is maintained by the equal in love and all other respects, but the friendship of superior and inferior is unable to maintain that position. But the unequal i.e., superior and inferior render according to their proportion in their relationship.

There is no complaint and quarrel relationship between the friendships on the grounds of virtue. Utility friendship formulates another picture, there is no present virtuous aspect so they wish good for each other without any self-interest, the friendship grounded on utility bears a self-interest aspect and as a result, the friends raise their complaints against each other if their interest falls. Pleasure friendship is not like utility friendship in respect of raised complaints against each other because pleasure is enjoyable while they both spend their time together and if any complaint is raised in that case this would seem ridiculous.

The friendship of utility is solely of complaints and quarrels relationship, as we know utility friendship is based on the theory of give and take, there is no virtuous perspective. As a consequence, we have seen that there is present a self-interest position. A friend deserves better than he has done before for another friend and wishes more benefit in their bargain. At the same time, they always think they got less than they should from another in that relationship.

The utility friendship carries two forms of justice viz. moral (unwritten) and legal. The legal form of justice is fixed terms, it is such kind of commercial variety where it is based on immediate payment. On the other hand, the moral kind of justice has no fixed terms like legal justice. It makes a gift, or does whatever it does, as to a friend (Aristotle, 2009 :160). The complaints raised in the utility friendship in most of the cases while men do not absorb the relation in the spirit of the same kind of friendship in which they contracted it. On the other side, friendship based on virtue does not arise compliant and so we can say that the elements of a friendship should be character and virtue.



### **The Importance of Practicing of Philosophy of Friendship**

In our society, some men enjoy their lives very happily and with supreme self-sufficiency, here the question is, is there any need for friends? And there is another question, 'When fortune is kind, what need of friends? But it is strange to hear. We need our friends in adversity as well as prosperity. It would be seen as very awkward that a supremely happy lives alone and at the same time no one would choose a lonely world 'since man is a political creature and one whose nature is to live with others' (Aristotle, 2009: 176).

A man can say that a friend can make a relationship with another for a useful or pleasant purpose. But for a happy man, the need may not arise. Happiness is an activity and only a person can enjoy this, of course, it is not present at the starting point like a piece of property. Happiness lies in being actively alive and in living well. Besides, men assume that the happy man ought to live pleasantly. But even if the happy man is self-sufficient, and lives alone then it would be very hard for him to be continuously active. So he needs a person for continuously active and if the person is his friend rather than a stranger then it would be better.

Friendship has both relational and complex structure which differs among the individuals. One can argue that despite being loyal to a friendship, there could be termination. Humans continually strive for happiness, where friends contribute a vital part, as they give company in both comfortable and difficult hours. Friendship has a goodness that is intrinsic in nature. In an Aristotelian way, a friend would be treated preferentially as he possesses several qualities like good characters and also performs good things. Hence, the relationship among the friends formulates a prerequisite for preferential treatment of friendship. Still, the grounding of friendship has to be impersonal (Dawson, 2012/2013: 7). The impersonal treatment of friends may not be as easy, it has some problems. Sometimes it would be difficult to decide whether to treat a friend as a character type or as an individual; though the manifestation of impersonal friendship should tend to be character type rather than being individual as far as the Aristotelian conception of friendship is concerned. Friends should share a common vision of life, and that would be the touchstone of any impersonal friendship (Jha, 2021: 182).

For the most part, by describing an interstate relationship as a friendship of utility, the word *friendship* can easily be substituted for *alliance* or *partnership*, whether those relationships are security-related or economic. In their self-interested forms, *friends* and *friendship* help frame interstate relations in a couple of ways. First, Aristotle admits that friendships based only on utility are fundamentally unstable. The interests of the parties determine their friendship in these situations, not the friendship itself. Consequently, if those interests change or if they can be more adequately served through some other means then the relationship will be reassessed and sometimes abandoned. To the extent that cities or states are seen as friends of utility, this already implies that their relationship will have a potentially unstable character. In an important sense, state actors know this to be true when they call each other friends. To put it another way, the predominant vision of friendship in international relations serves to further emphasize the fluidity and constant potential for realignment, if not outright betrayal, contained in realism's explanation of the balance of power. More than friendship, this is bilateral ties between the nations where the self-interest of a nation in terms of bureaucratic procedures, commercial interest, arms infrastructure, border security etc. play critical roles.

There is a second way in which the predominant use of *friend* and *friendship* as applied to states may have consequences for understanding international cooperation. Instead of reinforcing the notion of the fluidity found in friendships of utility, the simple use of the words *friend* and *friendship* points to the pesky possibility of a more stable relationship. Apart from collaboration based on mutual benefit, they allow for the consideration of alternative forms of partnership. Hence, ties of history, tradition, culture, ideology as well as past sacrifices of blood and treasure may lead states to talk about 'special relationships' or enduring friendships. This way, we can see that interstate relationships build up only on a benefit basis. So Aristotelian utility friendship is not great like virtue friendship in individual friendship, but it is great in interstate relationships.

### **Conclusion**

Nowadays love and marriage are more interesting than friendship in a busy and self-centered life, we can even say that there is not enough time

for friendship. The pleasure friendship of Aristotle and the lack of moral character are the root causes of the dilemma between love and friendship. If male-female relationships are dominated by sensual feelings then the problem arises and the relation stands in a position that is neither love nor friendship. But in this situation called infatuation, at first, the friendship is present and later period it transcends friendship to love. In that case, the younger mind forgets to distinction between love and friendship. Of course, it is also right that for being a lover one wishes to touch a level of friendship.

In *Phaedrus*, Socrates says that there were two loves, a higher and a lower, holy and unholy, a love of the mind and a love of the body. But the mind's true love cannot stay between two souls, until and unless they are escape from the grossness of earthly excitement. Then they can enjoy the heavenly beauty in the world. Then they remember their memories of childhood's old simplicity what they got when they entered their life. They would also realize a higher love of God and duty that united them. Their gladness would wait to preserve the ideals of justice, holiness and truth at the fountain of light. When they have achieved this superior state, no dilemma would cause a hitch whether they marry or live together in a holy and innocent friendship. In that way, both friendship and love will be complementary to each other, as *Phaedrus* signs off by saying 'Friends should have all things in common' with the aspiration of beautifying the inward soul. That commonness of friends is just like the Aristotelian concept of character friendship.

In contemporary society Aristotelian concept of virtuous friendship is very rare in count may seem outdated to some. But the character or virtue friendship which is also termed as perfect friendship reveals the true nature of friendship. In virtue friendship, self-disclosure is safe, but we cannot deny the role of merely friendliness because, at least we need a friend for self-disclosing as we know that human being needs to disclose their feelings to others. Nowadays it places a strong foundation in a postmodern era with its richness. So, we can say that Plato and Aristotelian conception of friendship is not merely the starting point of the philosophy of friendship as well as the raw material of friendship. The post-Aristotelian philosophers took this as raw material and developed their own views and tried to give a rich

philosophical standpoint of friendship. We always seek the character friend, of course, it is not possible for each case. But seeking a friend is itself a virtue.

The longing for a friend at times of despair explicates the value of friendship. The inherent worth that friendship has among various relationships, illustrates that we are always on the threshold of loneliness if we are devoid of friends. The interdependence on our fellow beings makes us realize that we cannot live alone and be aloof from the rest of the state of affairs of life. Philosophers have not only rationalized the value of friendship, they cannot ignore the quintessential value of emotion that stays between friends. The warmth and accompaniment of a friend is something the human being looks for in choosing a friend. Plato and Aristotle's philosophy give us a broad conception of friendship which forms the backbone of the philosophy of friendship as well as the significance of friendship in our lives. Today, when people are submerged into the domain of the fancy world of social media where the attention span has become much less, friendship still plays a key role in understanding each other, whether it involves spouses, parents and their offspring, colleagues and various other relationships.

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# Unveiling the Dimensions of Care Ethics: A Theoretical Exploration of Nel Noddings' Philosophy and Its Criticism

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to provide a theoretical investigation of Nel Noddings' care ethics, which is a relational and contextual approach to moral philosophy that focuses on the significance of care in human interactions. As a result of their reliance on abstract concepts, traditional moral theories such as deontology and utilitarianism are criticized by Noddings. Instead, he advocates for an ethics that is founded on empathy, responsiveness, and personal contact. A number of fundamental aspects of Noddings' philosophy are investigated in this work. These aspects include the contrast between natural and ethical care, the function of relational autonomy, and the significance of moral attention and reciprocity. In addition, it addresses the most significant critiques that have been levelled at Noddings' care ethics, such as its partiality, the possibility that it reinforces gender norms, and the absence of universal normative rules. Critics are particularly concerned about the fact that it does not include justice-based measures. In spite of these criticisms, the paper investigates the applicability of care ethics in areas such as education, healthcare, and global social justice. It argues that Noddings' framework continues to be an important contribution to contemporary ethical discourse, particularly when it is combined with considerations of justice and rights.

**Keywords:** *care ethics; ethics; justice; discourse; rights; education*

## Introduction

The development of care ethics by Nel Noddings constitutes an important movement in moral philosophy. It challenges the predominance of

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traditional ethical theories that place an emphasis on rules, responsibilities, or outcomes. The human capacity for empathy serves as the foundation for care ethics, which places an emphasis on the relational, emotional, and contextual aspects of moral behaviour. According to Noddings, an American philosopher and educator, conventional moral theories such as Kantian deontology and utilitarianism are criticized for their reliance on abstract principles and impersonal reasoning. He contends that these theories are unable to adequately capture the moral significance of personal relationships and human interaction. Noddings, on the other hand, presents an ethic of care that is founded on the lived experiences of care and response, particularly within the contexts of familial, educational, and caring relationships. In Noddings' care ethics, the notion that moral conduct arises from true attention to the needs of others and a relational feeling of duty is at the core of the philosophy. Unlike universalist systems, which dictate moral action based on hard rules or principles, Noddings' framework is situational and context-dependent, putting the emphasis on the specific circumstances of those who are involved. One of the most important aspects of her theory is the distinction between "natural care" and "ethical care," as well as the significance of reciprocity, empathy, and moral attention in the process of forming ethical conduct.

However, despite the fact that Noddings' care ethics provides an appealing alternative to conventional conceptualizations of morality, it is not without its detractors. Its lack of impartiality, the possibility of gender essentialism, and the absence of explicit normative criteria have all been called into doubt by different academics. In addition, there are others who believe that the fact that care ethics is primarily concerned with interpersonal relationships severely restricts its ability to solve bigger societal problems, particularly those that are associated with rights and justice. Specifically, the purpose of this work is to investigate the most important aspects of Noddings' care ethics and to critically engage with the most prominent criticisms. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the significance of care ethics in current moral discourse, particularly in areas such as education, healthcare, and global justice. This will be accomplished by analysing both the strengths and limitations of Noddings' framework. The study illustrates

the potential of care ethics to offer a more compassionate and relational approach to moral decision-making while addressing the obstacles it encounters in integrating justice and broader social concerns. This potential is highlighted through the exploration that is presented in the study.

### **The Foundations of Nel Noddings' Care Ethics**

Nel Noddings' care ethics, articulated in her pivotal work *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984), signifies a significant divergence from conventional moral theories, emphasizing human interactions and emotional bonds as central to ethical conduct. Her methodology contradicts the abstract, universalist paradigms of ethical reasoning that have historically prevailed in Western philosophy, especially Kantian deontology and utilitarianism. Noddings posits that care ethics is fundamentally relational, contextual, and rooted in the lived experiences of both caring and receiving care, highlighting the significance of empathy, attentiveness, and responsiveness. Noddings' ethical theory posits that caring constitutes the essence of morality. She contends that humans are inherently relational and that our foremost moral duty stems from these connections. Noddings perceives ethical behavior as arising from the authentic care one individual holds for another, in contrast to moral theories that depend on rules, responsibilities, or consequences. This method stands in stark contrast to the logical, objective tenets advocated by conventional moral systems.

Noddings differentiates between natural care and ethical care. Natural care denotes the inherent and instinctual affection that emerges within relationships, shown by a parent's love for their kid. Ethical care entails a deliberate dedication to the welfare of others, even when such an inclination is not instinctive. This distinction is vital because, for Noddings, morality pertains not to adherence to abstract principles but to cultivating caring connections via deliberate behaviors that demonstrate authentic concern for others. Noddings' methodology is relational, positing that moral decision-making arises from a continuous dialogue and interaction between the caregiver (the "one-caring") and the recipient of care (the "cared-for"). This relationship interaction is essential for comprehending her ethical worldview. She asserts, "Caring involves stepping out of one's own personal



frame of reference into the other's" (Caring, 1984), highlighting the significance of empathy and emotional involvement in ethical decision-making.

Noddings attacks conventional ethical theories, especially Kantian deontology and utilitarianism, for their dependence on impersonal norms and principles that neglect the nuances of human interactions. Kantian ethics assesses moral activities according to compliance with universal rules, exemplified by the categorical imperative. Kantian ethics highlights rationality, autonomy, and impartiality in the assessment of moral obligation. Noddings contends that this approach is excessively rigid and abstract, neglecting the emotional and relational dimensions of moral existence. Noddings critiques utilitarianism for its emphasis on enhancing happiness or utility for the majority. Utilitarian ethics frequently simplifies moral decision-making to an assessment of results, disregarding the qualitative dimensions of personal connections and experiences. Noddings asserts that the ethical significance of caring relationships cannot be encapsulated by utilitarian assessments, as they disregard the distinct needs and emotions of individuals. Noddings' care ethics repudiates the impartiality inherent in Kantian ethics as well as the consequentialism characteristic of utilitarianism. She promotes an ethic grounded in particularity and relationality. Care ethics acknowledges that moral duties stem from particular, tangible connections, and that ethical reasoning must consider the emotional and contextual aspects of those interactions.

A fundamental element of Noddings' care ethics is the notion of relational autonomy, which opposes the conventional liberal concept of individual autonomy. In conventional moral theories, autonomy is typically defined as independence and the ability to make reasonable, self-directed decisions. Noddings contends that this perspective on autonomy is deficient since it neglects the influence of interpersonal relationships on individual development. Noddings posits that genuine autonomy is relational, indicating that individuals' identities and moral obligations are profoundly intertwined with their connections. In her perspective, moral agency pertains not to making autonomous decisions grounded in universal principles, but to addressing the needs of others within the framework of interpersonal

relationships. In this context, autonomy pertains not to isolation or independence, but to responsiveness to the moral demands of others. Noddings underscores the “ethic of response,” which entails being attentive to the needs and emotions of others. This is fundamental to her ethical paradigm, as caring necessitates more than mere empathy; it demands a readiness to act on that empathy in a manner that addresses the specific needs of the one receiving care. She states, “We are absorbed in one another, and we are affected by the state of the individual receiving care.” This action compels us to address the articulated needs of those receiving care” (Caring, 1984).

Noddings emphasizes the significance of moral attention within care ethics. This idea pertains to the act of wholly attending to another individual’s needs and feelings, devoid of distractions from abstract principles or personal interests. Noddings contends that good caregiving hinges on one’s ability to be fully present and engaged with another individual. This moral focus is intricately connected to empathy, which Noddings considers fundamental for nurturing relationships. Empathy enables the caregiver to comprehend the needs and feelings of the recipient, establishing a basis for responsive ethical action. Noddings asserts, “Caring necessitates our presence with others in their experiences, rather than merely observing and determining what we believe would be optimal for them” (Caring, 1984). Care ethics is fundamentally interpersonal, necessitating caregivers to connect emotionally and relationally with those under their care. Empathy encompasses not just comprehending another individual’s circumstances but also entails a dedication to doing actions that fulfill that person’s wants and promote their well-being. This distinguishes Noddings’ care ethics from solely emotive or sentimental ethical frameworks. Although emotions are fundamental to her approach, they constitute only a segment of the process; effective care involves both emotional involvement and practical responsiveness.

Noddings posits that an exemplary caring relationship entails reciprocity between the caregiver and the recipient of care. This does not imply that care must be reciprocated equally; rather, the recipient of care should, at a minimum, recognize and respond to the care they receive. This reciprocity maintains the ethical relationship and guarantees that care is neither unilateral

nor exploitative. Noddings recognizes that not all partnerships will be entirely reciprocal, particularly in situations involving the care of children or vulnerable adults. She asserts that the recognition and appreciation of care are essential for sustaining a moral connection. In the absence of reciprocal appreciation, caregiving may become unsustainable or dehumanizing for the caregiver. Noddings' care ethics offers a substantial contribution through its practical application, particularly in the realm of education. Noddings contends that caring ought to serve as the cornerstone of ethical actions inside educational and institutional settings. She believes that education should prioritize cultivating nurturing relationships between teachers and students rather than merely conveying knowledge or attaining academic success. Consequently, educational institutions ought to be organized to emphasize the cultivation of empathy, attentiveness, and responsiveness. Noddings' care ethics has significantly impacted several caregiving professions, particularly in healthcare, where relational and empathetic methodologies are crucial. The focus on empathy and responsiveness in care ethics offers a significant framework for patient-centered care, prioritizing the knowledge of patients' specific needs and situations over impersonal, outcome-oriented methods.

### **Criticisms of Nel Noddings' Care Ethics**

Nel Noddings' care ethics, an innovative paradigm in feminist ethics, underscores the ethical importance of relationships and emotional bonds. Her methodology contests conventional ethical theories by emphasizing the lived experiences of caregiving and receiving care, positioning morality inside real relationships rather than abstract concepts. In her publication *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984), Noddings delineates seven fundamental characteristics that inform her care ethics. The characteristics of natural care vs ethical care, reciprocity in caring interactions, moral attention and empathy, and the institutional consequences of care form the theoretical foundation of her philosophy.

Noddings delineates a fundamental distinction in her care ethics between natural care and ethical care. This dichotomy emphasizes her belief that care is both an inherent human inclination and a moral ideal necessitating intentional action. Natural care is the instinctive and spontaneous expression

of care that arises organically from human connections, especially those characterized by love, affection, or attachment. An exemplary instance is the instinctive care a parent offers to their child. This type of caring is motivated by emotions and an inherent inclination to address the needs of others. Noddings contends that natural care is devoid of ethical contemplation or reasoning, as it emanates from an intrinsic, uncoerced dedication to another individual. Ethical care is invoked when innate feelings of affection or the desire to provide care are lacking or inadequate. Ethical care necessitates a deliberate moral endeavour to provide care to individuals beyond our inherent inclinations. Noddings contends that ethical care necessitates the deliberate choice to care, even when it may not be instinctive, as a manifestation of moral commitment. Ethical care is crucial in circumstances where caring connections are not inherently established, yet moral obligation still necessitates care and responsiveness. The differentiation between natural and ethical care is essential in Noddings' paradigm as it underscores the possibility of extending care beyond one's close family or friends to others within society. Ethical care necessitates a proactive moral commitment to acknowledge and address the needs of others, especially in the face of difficulties. Noddings asserts, "In ethical caring, I evoke my finest self and acknowledge the necessity to surmount my hesitance to care" (Caring, 1984).

An essential element of Noddings' care ethics is the reciprocity between the caregiver and the beneficiary of care. Noddings thinks that a genuine caring connection is characterized by a reciprocal interaction rather than a unilateral act of giving. Reciprocity, in this context, does not necessitate that the recipient of care must reciprocate in equal proportion, but rather that they recognize and respond to the care received. Noddings asserts that the recipient of care must acknowledge the caregiver's efforts by reciprocating in a manner that preserves the connection. This response may manifest in several ways, including gratitude, recognition, or alterations in emotional or behavioural patterns. Noddings elucidates that the quintessential caring connection encompasses a continuous discussion and reciprocal influence between the caregiver and the recipient of care. The recognition of the caregiver's efforts by the cared-for is essential for the caregiver's moral fortitude to be maintained. In the absence of mutual recognition, the

caregiving relationship may become unidirectional, resulting in burnout or emotional fatigue for the caregiver. Noddings asserts, "For caring to transpire, the recipient must acknowledge the care and demonstrate, either verbally or behaviourally, that it has been acknowledged" (Caring, 1984).

Noddings recognizes that total reciprocity may not always be feasible in specific situations, including those with young children, the elderly, or handicapped individuals. In such instances, the caregiver must continue to act ethically, notwithstanding the restricted ability of the recipient to reciprocate completely. Reciprocity is an ideal that fosters a nurturing relationship while remaining adaptable to diverse human circumstances. The essence of Noddings' care ethics lies in the significance of empathy and moral attentiveness. These principles constitute the emotional and cognitive foundation of care, since they encompass the capacity to comprehend and address the needs of others in a profoundly intimate and engaged way. Empathy is fundamental to Noddings' theory as it enables the caregiver to "enter the lived world of the cared-for" (Caring, 1984). Empathy encompasses the acknowledgment of others' emotions and needs, as well as emotional engagement with them. This involvement establishes the foundation for authentic moral behaviour, as it propels the caregiver beyond impersonal moral reasoning into a deeper comprehension of the other individual's circumstances. Moral attention, referred to as "engrossment" by Noddings, is the concentrated and intentional concentration that a caretaker directs towards the one receiving care. The caregiver must be completely present and attentive to the needs, feelings, and worries of the recipient of care.

Noddings thinks that moral attention constitutes a profound type of listening and observation, allowing the caregiver to adequately address the particular needs of the recipient of care. Noddings differentiates her concept of moral attention from the abstract, rule-oriented decision-making characteristic of conventional moral theories. Kantian ethics promotes universal concepts like the categorical imperative, whereas Noddings' care ethics highlights the significance of contextual responsiveness. Every compassionate relationship is distinct, and moral consideration enables the caregiver to make decisions informed by the specifics of the circumstance

rather than adhering to inflexible, universal guidelines. Moral attentiveness and empathy collectively build a more sophisticated and perceptive approach to ethical decision-making. They enable the caregiver to comprehend the particular requirements of the individual receiving care and to respond in a manner that directly meets those needs, rather than depending on generalized ethical principles. This relational and contextual methodology is a fundamental distinction of care ethics from conventional theories, which frequently emphasize impartiality and universality.

Noddings' care ethics transcends human connections, influencing institutional and societal dimensions, especially in education and caring. Noddings contends that care ought to transcend personal moral orientation and influence institutional operations, especially in contexts involving vulnerable populations like children, sick, or the elderly. Noddings examines the implementation of care ethics in education in her later work, notably *The Challenge to Care in Schools* (1992). She argues that educational institutions ought to be structured according to the principles of care, emphasizing student-teacher connections and cultivating conditions that promote empathy, emotional involvement, and responsiveness. Noddings contends that, instead of concentrating exclusively on academic achievement or standardized assessments, educational institutions should foster nurturing communities that recognize and attend to students' emotional and psychological need. In an institutional context, care ethics posits that organizations and policies need to promote interpersonal relationships and emotional welfare. In healthcare, a care ethics framework would emphasize patient-centered treatment that addresses the individual's emotional and physical needs, rather than viewing patients only as cases or statistics within a system. Noddings' care ethics, emphasizing relational connection and empathy, serves as a counterbalance to the bureaucratic, outcome-oriented forms of care prevalent in institutions such as hospitals, schools, and social agencies. Noddings asserts that care should be implemented at both the individual and institutional levels to cultivate societies that are genuinely ethical and compassionate. Care as an institutional practice promotes the establishment of systems that are more attuned to human needs and that cultivate significant relationships, rather than prioritizing efficiency or profit alone.

Nel Noddings' care ethics presents a relational, sympathetic, and contextual framework for moral philosophy. The four essential dimensions—natural versus ethical care, reciprocity, empathy and moral attention, and institutional implications—offer a thorough framework for comprehending care as a moral practice that transcends conventional ethical limits. Noddings' focus on relationships, emotional involvement, and responsiveness contests the abstract and impersonal characteristics of conventional ethics, presenting a moral theory intricately linked to human experience. Noddings' framework, despite criticisms regarding its potential subjectivity and apparent lack of universality, has significantly influenced sectors such as education, healthcare, and feminist ethics through its emphasis on the significance of caring in personal and institutional contexts.

Although Nel Noddings' care ethics has exerted considerable influence, especially within feminist philosophy, it has also faced substantial criticism. Academics have expressed apprehensions about the framework's 'bias', 'possible perpetuation of gender stereotypes', 'absence of universal principles', and 'inadequate consideration of justice and rights issues. This section examines the principal criticisms and the philosophical discussions they have initiated. A significant critique of Noddings' care ethics is its 'partiality', which denotes the preference for caring for others with whom we share intimate relationships, such as family and friends, over strangers or remote individuals. Noddings expressly anchors her theory in the significance of tangible relationships and emotional bonds, resulting in an emphasis on 'personal relationships' in ethical decision-making. She contends that moral obligations emerge from the 'relational context' of persons, indicating that we possess a heightened moral responsibility to care for those in proximity compared to those who are more remote.

Critics contend that this focus on partiality may result in 'moral favoritism' and disregard for the moral claims of individuals beyond one's inner circle. Some researchers, for instance, doubt the capacity of care ethics to effectively address extensive societal and global challenges, such as poverty, environmental degradation, or human rights, particularly since the individuals requiring care are frequently remote and unfamiliar to the caregiver. In her essay 'Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an

Ethic of Care' (1993), Joan Tronto challenges Noddings for prioritizing private ties over 'justice' and 'equity' in the public sphere. Tronto contends that care ethics, as articulated by Noddings, may become excessively limited and insular, inadequately offering a framework for resolving moral responsibilities to individuals outside one's local sphere. Tronto advocates for a more 'political' and 'publicly oriented' interpretation of care ethics that confronts social justice concerns and the allocation of care resources on a larger scale. Virginia Held, a philosopher of care ethics, asserts that although partiality is inherent and beneficial in personal connections, ethical theories must also consider the needs of strangers. She asserts, "We must reconcile our innate care with ethical care, and ethical theories should provide a framework for addressing distant others" (*The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*, 2006). Held contends that Noddings' paradigm necessitates augmentation to encompass moral obligations beyond immediate interactions, particularly within the realm of global interconnectedness.

A significant critique of Noddings' care ethics is its connection to 'gender essentialism' and the possible reinforcing of 'traditional gender norms'. Noddings' paradigm is frequently associated with 'feminine morality' due to her focus on the relational, nurturing, and emotional dimensions of care, traditionally tied to women's societal duties, especially as mothers and caregivers. In 'Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education' (1984), Noddings utilizes the experiences of women in caregiving responsibilities, leading some opponents to contend that this may perpetuate preconceptions regarding women's inherent propensity for caring. Sarah Ruddick, a feminist philosopher examining maternal ethics, critiques care ethics for perpetuating the normative expectation that caregiving is predominantly a female obligation. She contends that emphasizing care as a feminine attribute may mistakenly validate the 'disproportionate load' of caregiving assigned to women, especially within families and caregiving professions, potentially perpetuating the devaluation of women's labour.

In her examination of dependency and care ethics, Eva Feder Kittay challenges Noddings for inadequately addressing the 'structural inequities' that underlie caregiving duties. Kittay contends that care ethics must not only honour women's caregiving but also confront the 'social arrangements'



that restrict caregiving to women and render it marginal within society. She promotes a more 'transformative approach' to care that emphasizes the ethical significance of caregiving while aiming to redistribute caregiving obligations among genders and societal frameworks ('Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency', 1999). Noddings refutes the notion that her theory is essentialist; yet, detractors contend that her emphasis on traditionally feminine caregiving experiences may unintentionally perpetuate the belief that caregiving is inherently women's labour. Furthermore, they assert that care ethics must more effectively confront 'patriarchal systems' that diminish the value of care and confine it to the private realm, traditionally associated with women.

A further critique of Noddings' care ethics is its absence of universal normative principles. Unlike conventional ethical theories, such as Kantian deontology or utilitarianism, which offer definitive moral norms or principles for ethical decision-making, Noddings' care ethics is distinctly contextual and relational. She refutes the notion that moral activity may be dictated by universal principles, contending that morality arises from the 'specificities of relationships and the distinct demands of the individuals concerned. Critics contend that the lack of universal principles in care ethics may result in 'moral relativism', wherein ethical decisions are too context-dependent, leading to inconsistency or arbitrariness. Alison Jaggar, in her examination of feminist ethics, asserts that although the particularism inherent in care ethics is beneficial, it may 'fail to provide objective criteria' for adjudicating disputes among conflicting moral claims ('Feminist Ethics', 1991). Care ethics may encounter difficulties in providing a definitive conclusion when the demands of one individual clash with those of another, or when the interests of the caregiver and the recipient differ.

Martha Nussbaum critiques care ethics in her work on global justice for its absence of a 'universal framework' capable of addressing extensive issues, including human rights breaches, institutional inequality, and global poverty. Nussbaum contends that care ethics requires enhancement through a more comprehensive philosophy of justice that incorporates 'universal principles' of human dignity and rights. In the absence of such concepts, care ethics may be inadequately prepared to address 'global ethical dilemmas',

where impersonal structures and institutions frequently perpetrate harm, rather than individual interactions. This critique underscores a broader apprehension that Noddings' focus on the 'specific' and 'personal' aspects of moral decision-making may be insufficient for tackling more intricate or pervasive social issues that necessitate 'systematic moral reasoning' and 'explicit ethical norms. A pertinent critique of Noddings' care ethics is that it 'overlooks justice' and 'human rights' as essential elements of moral theory. Care ethics, prioritizing personal relationships and emotional reactivity, frequently diminishes the significance of 'justice, fairness, and rights', which are pivotal in numerous other ethical frameworks, especially 'liberal' and 'Kantian' theories.

Noddings contends that care ethics emphasizes the specific needs of persons within particular relationships, as opposed to abstract concepts of justice or universal rights. Critics argue that this approach neglects the significance of 'justice' in tackling 'structural disparities' and guaranteeing equity in social structures. For instance, whereas care ethics may effectively guide individual moral conduct, its applicability to matters such as 'distributive justice', 'legal rights', or 'institutional discrimination' remains ambiguous. Joan Tronto contends that for care ethics to serve as a comprehensive ethical framework, it must incorporate considerations of 'power' and 'injustice' un both personal and governmental spheres. She asserts that care ethics must address inquiries regarding 'who receives care, who delivers it, and under what conditions', all of which pertain to justice ('Moral Boundaries', 1993). Moreover, several opponents contend that Noddings' emphasis on care within personal relationships potentially 'overlooks the rights' of those outside of these direct caring connections. In instances of human rights violations, a care-centered paradigm may inadequately establish moral justification for holding criminals accountable or for advocating the rights of victims, particularly when the caregiver does not have a personal connection to them.

Virginia Held posits that an equilibrium between care and justice is essential for a more comprehensive moral philosophy. She states, "Care devoid of justice may result in favouritism and exclusion, whereas justice lacking care can be austere and impersonal" ('The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global', 2006). Held contends that care ethics must include

concepts of justice to acknowledge and meet the moral claims of all individuals, especially those who are marginalized or vulnerable. Nel Noddings' care ethics has substantially influenced moral philosophy by highlighting the significance of relationships, empathy, and responsiveness in ethical decision-making. Nevertheless, the theory has encountered significant criticism for its bias, potential perpetuation of gender stereotypes, absence of universal principles, and disregard for justice and rights. These critiques underscore the inadequacies of care ethics in tackling wider societal and global challenges, especially those concerning justice and equity. Noddings' care ethics is a significant framework for comprehending personal and relational morality; yet, detractors contend that it requires augmentation with concepts of justice, fairness, and universal rights to provide a more holistic ethical theory.

### **The Relevance and Application of Noddings' Care Ethics in the Modern World**

Nel Noddings' care ethics has developed into a significant ethical paradigm that confronts numerous modern issues in personal, social, political, and institutional spheres. Noddings' theory underscores the significance of relationships, empathy, and responsiveness, presenting a persuasive method for moral decision-making that diverges from more abstract, principle-oriented ethical frameworks like deontology or utilitarianism. In the contemporary world, characterized by heightened social complexity, global interconnectedness, and urgent humanitarian challenges, care ethics offers a pertinent framework for addressing issues in education, healthcare, social justice, environmental sustainability, and global ethics. This section examines the contemporary implementation and significance of Noddings' care ethics. A prominent application of Noddings' care ethics is in the domain of education. Noddings has consistently championed the re-evaluation of educational institutions through the perspective of care, contending that schools ought to emphasize nurturing connections between educators and students instead of solely concentrating on academic performance and standardized assessments. In her book 'The Challenge to Care in Schools' (1992), Noddings attacks conventional educational systems for their impersonal, outcome-oriented methodologies and advocates for the establishment of 'caring communities' within schools.

In contemporary education, when students frequently encounter mental health issues, bullying, and social ostracism, care ethics offers a paradigm for enhancing ‘emotional well-being’ and cultivating inclusive settings. Contemporary educational institutions, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, have progressively acknowledged the necessity for mental health assistance and emotional support for students. Noddings’ care ethics, emphasizing ‘relationality’ and ‘empathy’, provides a framework for developing educational institutions that prioritize both academic advancement and the emotional and social growth of students. Noddings contends that educators ought to immerse themselves in their students’ lives, demonstrating authentic interest and concern for their welfare. This relational approach is crucial for cultivating an environment in which students feel acknowledged, appreciated, and encouraged. By integrating care into the curriculum and daily interactions, educators can cultivate supportive environments that foster students’ academic and personal growth. Noddings’ care ethics critiques the competitive, achievement-driven characteristics of contemporary education, promoting an alternative that emphasizes cooperation, empathy, and concern for others. The prioritization of care over competition is becoming increasingly pertinent at a time marked by escalating educational inequity and a mental health crisis among students.

The domain of ‘healthcare’ has increasingly acknowledged the significance of ‘patient-centered care’, an approach that strongly corresponds with Noddings’ ethics of care. Noddings’ philosophy advocates for caregivers to address the specific needs of individuals and to interact with them on a personal, empathic basis. This is especially pertinent in hospital environments, when people frequently experience depersonalization or are diminished to their medical issues. Patient-centered care, which prioritizes comprehending the patient as a complete individual and addressing their emotional, social, and psychological needs, exemplifies the practical application of care ethics. Empathy, communication, and responsiveness, fundamental principles of Noddings’ care ethics, are widely acknowledged as vital attributes for healthcare providers. Contemporary medical ethics, which historically emphasized principles like autonomy, beneficence, and non-maleficence, is now integrating ‘relational and emotional’ aspects of care that correspond

with Noddings' theory. In 'palliative care' and 'end-of-life care', where patients' emotional and psychological well-being are frequently as significant as their physical health, care ethics provides a framework for delivering compassionate, patient-centered care. In these situations, the significance of relationships and empathy is crucial, and healthcare personnel are required to address not only medical symptoms but also the emotional and existential issues of patients and their families.

Furthermore, Noddings' focus on the 'mutual recognition' between caregiver and recipient is crucial in healthcare. Patients must be recognized as individuals with distinct experiences and worries, and healthcare personnel must be vigilant in addressing these needs to guarantee that care is both effective and compassionate. This patient-centered approach is becoming increasingly pertinent in an age characterized by 'medical technologization' and 'bureaucratic healthcare systems', where patients frequently perceive themselves as nameless cases rather than individuals entitled to customized care. A significant domain where Noddings' care ethics is pertinent now is in the discourse surrounding 'social justice' and 'human rights'. Contemporary challenges, including poverty, inequality, systemic racism, and gender discrimination, necessitate ethical frameworks that consider the relational and emotional aspects of injustice. Care ethics, emphasizing attentiveness to others' needs, offers a relational framework for comprehending and overcoming social inequities. Noddings' theory has faced criticism for potentially neglecting justice issues, as previously mentioned; nonetheless, scholars like as Joan Tronto and Virginia Held have endeavoured to enhance care ethics by incorporating a more robust emphasis on justice. In 'Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care' (1993), Tronto contends that care ethics must consider the 'political dimensions of care', encompassing the inequitable allocation of caregiving obligations and the insufficient support for caregivers within society.

Contemporary discourse on social justice posits care ethics as a framework to tackle the 'interpersonal' and 'structural' facets of injustice. For instance, care ethics can be utilized in addressing 'economic inequality', wherein the requirements of vulnerable individuals and communities are frequently overlooked by impersonal economic institutions. Care ethics

emphasizes the moral significance of addressing the particular needs of disadvantaged groups, offering a paradigm to tackle the ‘human impact of inequality’ that complements justice-oriented methodologies. Within the framework of ‘racial justice’, care ethics underscores the need of ‘attending to’ the lived experiences of marginalized groups and ‘reacting with empathy’ to their needs and concerns. Movements like ‘Black Lives Matter’ and other social justice initiatives underscore the necessity for ‘compassionate solidarity’ with those enduring structural racism. Noddings’ care ethics, emphasizing relational and emotional dimensions of ethical behaviour, provides a significant perspective for comprehending the ‘emotional harm’ inflicted by racism and the necessity for ‘interpersonal and systemic solutions’ to mitigate it.

In an era of climate change and environmental degradation, care ethics has gained significance in the discourse of ‘environmental ethics’.

Historically, environmental ethics has primarily been influenced by utilitarian or rights-based paradigms, including ‘deep ecology’ and ‘environmental justice’ frameworks, which emphasize the rights of non-human organisms or the benefits of conserving ecosystems for future generations. Care ethics provides a more ‘relational and responsive approach’ to environmental ethics by emphasizing our emotional connections to the natural world and our moral need to nurture the environment as an extension of our relationships. Ecofeminists, like Carol Gilligan and Karen Warren, have established links between care ethics and environmental stewardship, contending that the ‘feminine ethic of care’ is applicable to human interaction with nature. They assert that environmental degradation frequently stems from a ‘impersonal, exploitative attitude’ towards the natural world, which care ethics aims to oppose by promoting ‘empathy and responsiveness’ to the needs of both human and non-human life. Care ethics promotes the consideration of ‘emotional and relational relationships’ with the environment, arguing for a transition from an exploitative perspective to one of ‘nurturing and stewardship’. Noddings’ care ethics can be utilized in local community initiatives aimed at ecosystem preservation, biodiversity protection, or climate change mitigation.

### **Conclusion**

Nel Noddings’ care ethics provides a significant re-evaluation of morality by redirecting attention from theoretical principles to the tangible

experiences of human connections, emotional involvement, and the act of caregiving. Her paradigm, based on the differentiation between natural and ethical care, underscores the significance of empathy, reciprocity, and moral consideration in influencing ethical conduct. Noddings' scholarship has profound consequences, especially in education, healthcare, and feminist ethics, where relational dynamics are fundamental to the practice of caring. Nonetheless, despite the potency and impact of Noddings' idea, it is not exempt from criticism. Critics have questioned the potential 'bias' of care ethics, its 'gendered presuppositions', and its 'absence of universal norms'. Moreover, its restricted focus on matters of 'justice' and 'rights' prompts inquiries over its ability to tackle broader societal and global ethical dilemmas. Noddings' emphasis on relational care enhances ethical discussions; yet, these critiques underscore the necessity of reconciling personal care with overarching principles of fairness, justice, and equity. Notwithstanding these problems, the persistent significance of Noddings' care ethics resides in its capacity to provide a more human-centric, relational framework for ethics in an ever more impersonal society. Care ethics, by incorporating empathy, attentiveness, and the ethical importance of relationships, offers a significant alternative to conventional moral theories, particularly in situations where human connections and emotional reactivity are crucial to moral decision-making.

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# Patriarchy as a Root Cause of Gender Discrimination: A Feminist View

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## Abstract

This paper is an attempt to emphasise the role of patriarchy in gender discrimination. As far as gender discrimination is concerned, among the three forms of misogyny that feminists identified, 'patriarchy' might be the strongest one, which plays the central role in perpetuating gender discrimination in society. In reality, all sorts of discrimination that women face in their day-to-day lives are due to a patriarchal hegemony. In short, patriarchy is that field where sexism and phallogentrism – another two forms of misogyny, are reflected. Patriarchy is men's dominance; the absolute authority of men. The peculiarity of patriarchal society is that the institutions, politics, customs, etc. all are developed to give primacy to men, where men are the dominant and women are the subordinate. Because of patriarchal dominance women are excluded from basic human rights and their dignity is also being violated which is simultaneously accelerating the marginalization of women. So, there is no problem in saying that patriarchy is a conclusive hindrance to women's emancipation. Hence in this project, we shall try to explore how patriarchy is responsible for indulging gender discrimination and whether patriarchy is unhealthy for women only or it has an equal impact on men also.

**Keywords:** *gender discrimination; misogyny; sexism; patriarchy; phallogentrism; women's marginalization*

The concept that frequently comes up in our mind when we are talking about gender discrimination is 'patriarchy' because it has been seen in socio-ethical discussions that patriarchy plays an important role in gender

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discrimination. As far as gender discrimination is concerned feminists get wind of a misogynistic attitude working behind gender discrimination. Naturally, the question comes, what does mean by ‘misogynistic attitude’? The word misogyny is meant as ‘women hatred’, so the derogatory attitude of society towards women i.e., women are the root cause of all evils, the only existence of women lies in the service of her husband, women have no art sense, women are weak; has no rationality etc. all these are considered as misogynistic attitude to women which cannot acceptable from moral ground. Since, morality always seeks or to say, tries to establish equality between both men and women, gender discrimination on the contrary appears as a strong hindrance towards this goal. Feminists have now recognised three levels of misogyny—sexism, patriarchy, and phallocentrism—that contribute to gender discrimination. These misogynistic behaviours can be referred to as the main causes of gender discrimination. Feminists argue that there are three kinds of misogyny: acting, institutional, and conceptual. Acting misogyny is attributed to “sexism,” institutional misogyny to “patriarchy,” and conceptual misogyny to “phallocentrism.” In this project, we shall try to focus on patriarchy since it appears to us that ‘patriarchy’ is the root of all sorts of discrimination that women face in their day-to-day lives. However, as sexism and phallocentrism play a vital role in gender discrimination along with patriarchy so, before going into patriarchy it will be more effective to start the discussion by mentioning the other two levels of misogyny briefly.

“Sexism,” as a misogynistic term, refers to gender-based social stereotypes and overt forms of discrimination. When a particular action of a man or even a woman expresses a clownish attitude towards women that action is called sexism. In other words, when someone’s action openly disadvantages women, thinks women are inferior and also thinks it is legitimate to treat women as inferior this kind of action is called ‘sexist action.’<sup>1</sup> The example can be given as women are the root cause of all evil, some of our ancient scriptures compare women with smugglers and say neither of them can be trusted etc. In our present society eve teasing, making rude comments to girls for wearing short dresses, and catcalls to tease girls all are considered sexist attitudes. Now if we try to find what is the locus of

sexism, we can see it is deeply rooted in patriarchy, another form of misogyny. Contrary to sexism, patriarchy is a form of covert discrimination. It is male supremacy. We shall ponder upon this later on, but before that let's have a look at phallocentrism because where sexism manifests itself at the patriarchal level, patriarchal power develops at the phallocentric level.

The word 'phallocentrism' comes from the Greek word 'phallus' which means penis, it emphasized on masculine viewpoint or in other words centred on a male attitude. Where sexism spreads misogynistic attitudes at the acting level and patriarchy indulges the same at the institutional level; phallocentrism ensures male supremacy and women's hatredness at the conceptual level. Put another way, phallocentrism fosters a mindset that rejects women's lived experiences. In a nutshell, phallocentrism is; perceiving the world through the lens of a male's conceptual scheme. For example, Aristotle defined man as a 'rational animal', and when he came to women, he called her 'deformed man'. According to feminists, the definition of man given by Aristotle is governed by phallocentrism because, the 'rationality' that has been talked about is not context-neutral and also excludes emotion, which goes against women's natural qualities. On this ground, feminists objected not only to Aristotle, but the elevated philosophical thinking of Immanuel Kant and John Rawls is no exception in this regard since they trace a fallacy of male bias to their thinking.<sup>2</sup> Now among these three, we shall try to see how patriarchy consecrated gender discrimination in society.

The word patriarchy or in the South-Asian language *pitritantra* or *pitrisatta*<sup>3</sup> is an age-old concept that means the 'rule of male', widely the term is used as male domination; the absolute authority of men or the power they hold and by which they think that they can dominate women. As Basin defines "Patriarchy is a social and ideological system which considers men to be superior to women, one in which men have more control over resources and decision-making."<sup>4</sup> The peculiarity of the patriarchal society is that the institutions, politics and customs of this system are all developed to give primacy to men. In a patriarchal social structure, men are the protector and women are protected. However, in this instance, what is remarkable is that in order for women to receive this protection, they must acknowledge and submit to men's formal authority and abide by their laws and

regulations. Furthermore, it should be highlighted that women's daily experiences with sexual harassment at work, lack of decision-making authority in the home, and other aspects of this patriarchal social system amply demonstrate how patriarchal domination is concealed in society.

Now the question is the patriarchy that has been talking about, how did it originate? In other words, what is the root of this patriarchy? Regarding the question of the roots of patriarchy, an extensive explanation is found in feminist research which is of great importance. However, apart from these two views are found. The former group believes that patriarchy is a natural phenomenon therefore it is universal; traditionalists come in this group. Whereas the latter group viz., Marxist feminists and radical feminists believe that it is not a natural phenomenon, but rather consciously constructed by society.<sup>5</sup>

As far as patriarchal dominance and women's subjugation is concerned it has been found that women were severely marginalised in the patriarchal Victorian era. Thus, the prominent feminist thinker Virginia Woolf in her seminal work *A Room of One's Own* (1929) extensively portrayed patriarchal dominance. According to feminist critics, women faced discrimination and oppression just for being women, and the only way out was to participate in the ongoing political conflict known as the power struggle. In this regard, Woolf addressed the subject matter of women's real liberation in her novel *A Room of One's Own*, which may result in altered standards for interpersonal interactions. She highlights the need to eradicate all types of gender discrimination for women to be independent at the socio-political, economic, and intellectual levels since she experienced that the patriarchal society inevitably suppressed women's intelligence. Woolf further marks that, women's economic reliance on men was a crucial factor in their miserable status during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, they were not given the flexibility or chance to develop their creative potential.<sup>6</sup>

Now let's analyse the other two views. The traditionalists opined that patriarchy is biologically determined so it is natural. According to them the difference between men and women is natural or can be said biological and due to biology, it is naturally determined what will be the social role of men

and women. As women produce children, their only role in society is to become mothers, caring for and nurturing children. For this task, women are dependent on men as they are physically strong. So, the traditionalist propagates that, this physical strength makes men superior and the lack of this strength makes women inferior and it is quite natural that those who are strong will rule; superiority justifies power. So, the biological difference between men and women, which is natural too along with the physical strength of men indicates that patriarchy is not a social construction but it is natural. Gerda Lerner asserts that “traditionalists, whether working within a religious or a ‘scientific’ framework, have regarded women’s subordination as universal, God-given, or natural, hence immutable... What was survived, survived because it was best; it follows that it should stay that way.”<sup>7</sup>

Now passing on to the latter view who proposed that patriarchy is not natural; it is not determined by biology the Marxist feminists, radical feminists, and social feminists come into this domain. According to Fredrick Engels, patriarchy emerged through three stages of changes in society i.e., savagery,<sup>8</sup> barbarism<sup>9</sup> and civilization.<sup>10</sup> According to him in savagery, there was no class-gender division because people lived almost a wild life. But throughout the changes of time division of labor is introduced based on the role of men and women. While women are confined to the caring and rearing of children, on the other hand, men become masters in activities in the public sphere, which leads men to the top of power. According to Engels, the bragging of the power of males is applied through occupying the animals and slaves; basically, women slaves and treating them as private property. These property rights again transfer from the father to the son and inheritance of paternal property is established although women are out of this inheritance of property. Thus, Engels narrated, “The downfall of maternal law was the historic defeat of the female sex. The men seized the reins also in the house, the women were stripped of their dignity, enslaved, tools of men’s lust, a mere instrument for breeding children.”<sup>11</sup>

It is clear from the above explanation of Engels that the subordination of women is spring because of the lack of property rights and economic rights. This is not only Engels’s position, before him, Raja Ram Mohan Roy as a social reformist also talks about the same issue. According to Roy one

of the most important reasons for the degradation of women is the exclusion of women from property rights which has a deep-rooted consequence. Following him, it can be said that gender discrimination is actually; rooted in the denial of women's property rights. He was critical of the commentator of the *Dāyavāga*<sup>12</sup> school for shrunken women's property rights. Roy was a firm believer in access to women's property rights, according to him 'It is a modern interpretation of ancient law that he thinks, has corrupted the original intent and content of the Hindu law and serves to deny property rights to women.<sup>13</sup>To support his view Ram Mohan Roy cites the example from the largest code of Hindus i.e., *Manusmriti*. Although it has been seen that *Manusmriti* is the greatest scripture of women's inferiority, however, it does not deny women's property rights completely. In the 118<sup>th</sup> verse of Ch.9, it states that – "to the maiden (sisters) the brothers shall severally give (portions) out of their shares, each out of his share one-fourth part; those who refuse to give (it), will become outcast."<sup>14</sup> Thus, as there is no restriction to the access of women's property rights, the denial of the same is actually a well-designed plan of patriarchy. The strategy behind this is that, without having the resources, women become weaker and it will be easier for patriarchy to dominate women. Hence, access to property rights is a fundamental aspect of women's liberation and as long as women are not aware of themselves, they will be victims of this suppression.

Now if we look at radical feminists, from a slightly different point of view they are expressing the opinion that patriarchy as a social construct existed in society before private property. According to them the reason behind women's suppression is not only the exclusion of property rights but their reproductive capacity is also a factor, which is completely controlled by men. Put another way, under male dominance, men retain complete control over women's reproductive and productive health. Thus, according to the above explanations, patriarchy is not a natural phenomenon rather, patriarchy has been established in society through the establishment of authority over women by men.<sup>15</sup>

The question that now has to be answered is: what exactly is the nature of this male primacy or male dominance? Is it consistently the same everywhere? If we observe the oppression of women in different societies

or different areas of the same society, we shall see the nature of male domination is not the same. Stated differently, it is possible that the laws and policies that have historically applied to women have changed, and that women living in rural and urban regions may not be subject to the same laws and policies. Furthermore, the type of power that exists over women may vary between the East and the West. It follows that the nature of male dominance, or patriarchy, likewise shifts in response to environmental changes. However, one thing is universally true: males hold the positions of authority and govern all societal decision-making. Thus, Basin rightly said, that in society “the broad principles remain same, i.e., men are in control, but the nature of this control may differ.”<sup>16</sup> At this juncture she further asserts ‘Patriarchy is historically constructed and its form, content and context can be different in different contexts, and at different times. Like all social systems, patriarchy too has an ideology and structure which together ensure that men are heads of households and inheritors of family names and property.’<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, women are supposed to be frail, helpless, and incapable of engaging in conversation beyond choosing what to eat, what to do, and where to go. Additionally, the woman had to make sure that her husband and family could find refuge at home from the stress of an industrialised world. Since societal beliefs are to perceive men as physically strong, therefore, it assumes that men are destined to rule over women. Thus, Woolf challenges the implicit meaning of the categorisation of values, attitudes, and language and demonstrates how a woman’s internal struggle can be caused by the patriarchal society. In this male-dominated society, women are treated like second-class citizens, in more detail women are treated like nothing who must put up with and manage a wide range of challenges, particularly those pertaining to men’s standing.<sup>18</sup>

Now let’s try to understand how patriarchy indulges gender discrimination. We have already got a glimpse of it from the above discussion, but which aspects of society are under the control of patriarchy, exploring this question will help us to better understand the role of patriarchy in gender discrimination. Since patriarchy means male domination so, this domination is reflected in all aspects of society. But where this domination is reflected to a greater extent, is in the daily life of women, which we have already

mentioned a little. So, in this case, we shall try to see if there is any specific aspect of women that is controlled by men or if the whole of womanhood is under patriarchal control. Answering such a question is comparatively difficult but we can identify some areas of women that are under the control of patriarchy, viz., women's productive and reproductive labour, women's sexuality, women's property rights etc. Apart from this religion, politics, law & customs all these areas of society show a sign of patriarchic control. This needs elaboration, on why it can be seen in this manner. Our following discussion will throw some light on it. In this regard, Sylvia Walby conclusively said "Women are not passive victims of oppressive structures. They have struggled to change both their immediate circumstances and the wider social structures."<sup>19</sup> In her book *Theorizing Patriarchy*, she focuses on six structure of patriarchy and their interrelation to bring up the male dominance which follows, paid employment, household production, culture, sexuality, violence, and state we shall attempt to talk about them.

While discussing patriarchal control, the first thing to see is where this control starts from. According to feminists the center of patriarchal control is the family because it is from there that the oppression of women begins. In other words, it is the family which directly or indirectly promotes patriarchy. It is supposed that men's power is hereditary in the family, he is the dominant and the woman is subordinate. Thus, Gerda Lerner said, "The family not merely mirrors the order in the state and educates its children to follow it, it also creates and constantly reinforces that order."<sup>20</sup> Within a patriarchal society, women's productive and reproductive health is the first area to be attempted to be regulated. It is to be mentioned that as far as productivity or production is concerned both men's and women's labour is required. The issue now is that, based on this labour, the mainstream society creates differences among labourers and places women at the bottom of the social scale. In several areas, such as tea gardens, building construction, road construction, coal mining, etc., it has frequently been noted that men are paid more for doing the same task, but women are not paid as much. Even after dedicating a whole day to household responsibilities, women must hear that they have accomplished nothing. So, it is very convenient to say that women's productivity has always been undervalued. They are bound to

stay in the courtyards of the house and have to provide all kinds of household chores free of cost, like cleaning the house properly, feeding the kids, caring for parents, and so on.<sup>21</sup>

With the same line of thought another aspect of women that has been tried to controlled by patriarchy is women's reproduction. Reproduction can be of two types viz., biological and social, biological reproduction refers to giving birth to a new life. Whereas social reproduction refers the caring for children, feeding them, nourishing them etc. In careful observation, it will be seen that when it comes to women's reproduction, in that case also husband or in detail, patriarchy takes all the decisions about when she will be conceived, whether she needs to conceive at all, how many children will she have etc. that is to say, by controlling these, the motherhood is also controlled by patriarchy. As Basin says "Patriarchy not only forces women to be mothers, it also determines the conditions of their motherhood."<sup>22</sup>

Another area of women that is controlled by men is women's sexuality. It is supposed that women are bound to provide sexual services to men. In other words, men can force women to provide sex services as per man's desire and needs. This turns into women's sexual objects. But this sex service is provided by women in case of after marriage to her husband only, outside of marriage it is completely impermissible and if a woman does this, she gets the badge of a prostitute by society. But a man can go to a brothel even after marriage if he wants and even then, the family and society point fingers at the woman that there must be some defect in her. So, these are the differences in ideology i.e., a man can go brothel, can force his wife into conjugal activity despite his wife's disinclination but the woman cannot do this. Even in this patriarchal regime, marital rape cannot be established in society, that is to say, a woman finds it difficult to speak up in society about marital rape either because of feelings of shame or because of fear of the family. Apart from this patriarchy also control women's sexuality by eve teasing, molestation, threat of rape etc.

Further, in patriarchal regimes, the property rights of women are also controlled by men, and family resources are only passed from one man to another man i.e., from father to son.<sup>23</sup> It can be said that control of women's



property rights is a strategy of men to dominate women. We can explain the same with an analogy, i.e., as we know in the case of caste discrimination an effort is made to exclude the backward communities from policymaking so that they can be easily dominated. Similarly, we can say that, in case of suppression of women the strategy is, if women do not have resources, then they will not be able to present their claims properly, thus it will be easier for men to keep them under their control.

Now let's analyse Walby's six structure of patriarchy and their interrelation to understand the male dominance. It has been found that the aforementioned area of patriarchal domination is not different from Walby's six structure of patriarchy. The first structure, i.e., paid employment focus on that, in the workplace, women experience biased financial assistance, unjust treatment, and frequently hold less demanding position than their male co-workers. Similarly, in the household production women must give her labour in free for her family's expectations. Also, the sexuality and culture are controlled by patriarchy which we have seen in little before. It has been found in patriarchal society gender norms and expectations around sexual activity are governed by distinct sets of regulation. Further, as far as culture is concerned, the religion, education, and other factors create and maintain patriarchal images of women. Consequently, these perspectives influence how women perceive femininity. The fifth structure of patriarchy as mentioned by Walby is 'violence', which includes attempt to rape, sexual assault in both household and workplace, sexual harassment etc. And the final structure is "state" which is the field of exclusive authority and legitimate coercion of power in the spectacle of patriarchy. Now to note that, Walby actually focus on two different views of patriarchy, viz., private patriarchy and public patriarchy, and the six structure of patriarchy comes under the domain of these two types of patriarchy. Private patriarchy primarily focusses on the women's oppression in the household production on the other hand, public patriarchy control over the public sites. Now Walby narrated that, regarding the shift from private to public patriarchy there entangle a change both in the relationships between the structure and in the structure themselves. As in the private form household production holds the dominant structure; however, when comes to public form it changes into employment

and state. All of the remaining patriarchal structure are still there in each form; they only differ in which ones are prominent.<sup>24</sup>So, there will be nothing wrong in saying that not a partial aspect of women's lives but the whole of womanhood is under the shadow of men's control and domination. Feminists will therefore say here, that by controlling those particular areas of women the freedom of women is being controlled too.

Thus, in light of the discussion mentioned above of patriarchal hegemony of power, it can be concluded that patriarchy plays a significant role in the continuation of gender discrimination in society. In addition, women's dignity is violated and they are denied access to basic human rights as a result of patriarchal dominance, which hastens the marginalisation of women. Thus, there is no difficulty in saying that patriarchy consciously nullifies women's emancipation. The sole aim of patriarchy is male supremacy; the monopolisation of men's power.

The question now is, since patriarchy is clearly an institutional framework, why is it that society still finds it impossible to eradicate? And this is where phallocentrism- another form of misogyny, comes in; as a strong form of gender discrimination. In other words, it can be said that the thread of this patriarchy is rooted deep in the conceptual level of society technically called phallocentrism, the idea of which we have briefly sketched earlier. As far as phallocentrism is concerned, the position of women is very much subordinate in this scheme. As a reason-based theory, it accounts that a woman has to gain equality by transcending her female identity. In detail, phallocentrism accounts for a tripartite classification of man, woman and human and shows that this 'Human' is such an essence that is sex/gender neutral and by developing such an essence man and woman both can achieve dignity and equality. But feminists have the objection that, the human essence that is being talked about is again male-biased and regulated under the umbrella of patriarchy. According to them in this phallocentric scheme, everything is determined with respect to men and all that discords from maleness is considered as 'other', and in this way, phallocentrism gives higher values to the masculine characteristics rather than the feminine characteristics. Apart from this, feminists also opine that phallocentrism along with androcentrism persists by a logic of domination, viz., 'superiority justifies

subordination'. That is to say, since in the phallogentric scheme male virtues are considered as higher value, so, the domination over women is considered legitimate in this scheme by the principle mentioned above.<sup>25</sup>

So, it is clear that phallogentricism consciously rehashes favouritism to the rise of patriarchal hegemony in society. That is to say, phallogentricism gives rise to such a thought cycle in our society where social norms, customs, etc. are all framed in terms of patriarchal ideals. In other words, it is thought that patriarchy is the controller of everything. However, it should be noted in this context that, in this phallogentric scheme, patriarchal domination over women is not only bragging by men; in some cases, this domination is bragging by women also. The implication is that, since this control tendency is so ingrained in our thinking, women's liberation from its influence is not easy. But the question that demands serious importance in this context is that, in this phallogentric scheme do the women only dominate, or men are also affected by it? In other words, do all men take advantage of phallogentricism in the patriarchal regime, or do men also equally become victimized in the patriarchy?

Actually, if we notice carefully, we can say that such a narrow-mindedness like phallogentricism can never be good for anyone, such mindedness always encourages discriminatory thinking in society, harmful to all irrespective of male/female, rich/poor, higher caste/lower caste and in the shade of such phallogentric scheme patriarchy gets a chance to flourish. At this juncture, Basin said "Just as it is important to see what patriarchy does to women, it is equally important to see what it does to the minds, imaginations, psyches and behaviour of men."<sup>26</sup> With the same line of thought Shefali Moitra also uttered, "The...domination/subordination shows that the role of domination is not confined to men, nor is the role of subordination confined to women. Rather domination is reserved for 'male-gender virtues', which could be present in biological females just as female-gender virtues could be present in biological males. Phallogentricism endorses a structural form that can victimize both men and women depending on where they are positioned on the entire phallogentric scale."<sup>27</sup> Thus, a careful observation of the patriarchy reveals that it is neither suitable for men nor women. It is true that by birth right men get the advantages of patriarchy but whether

they utilize those advantages or not entirely depends on other factors. But the problem is that despite being a man, the masculine qualities determined by society, e.g., manly, bold, hardy, stout-hearted etc. if he cannot utilize then he too has to be exploited by patriarchy. So, it would not be an exaggeration to say that while patriarchy interferes with women's lived experience, men are not exempted from it either.<sup>28</sup> Finally, in addition to this, it can be said that not only patriarchy, but any kind of 'ism' which introduces discrimination instead of establishing equality in society is not good for the progress of society and the fair and normal life of men and women. Moreover, it violates human dignity by promoting redundant discrimination between men and women, which is morally unjustified too.

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## Moral Worth of Rousseau's Women

Suyasha Singh Isser\*

### Abstract

The objective of this paper is to examine the position of women in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's concept of the General Will. Rousseau's idea of a collectively held sense of common interest paved the way for significant reforms in 17th-century France, keeping pace with changes in culture, politics, and technology. His advocacy for Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity continues to resonate because it presents a positive representation of the people. However, a key issue arises when this principle fails to provide women with an equal standing. The goals of this study are rooted in gaining a historical understanding of this exclusion. To address this, Rousseau's key works—*The Social Contract*, *Discourses on Inequality*, *Emile*, and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*—have been carefully considered. These texts were chosen to explore the functioning of a society where patriarchal thought dominated both public and private spheres, and where Rousseau laid the foundations for what he saw as a model of good governance. Rousseau's *Social Contract* aimed to establish a flawless theory of governance, but its main criticism lies in the fact that it operates within a strongly masculine framework, which demonstrates a lack of moral rectitude. Rousseau's failure to adequately incorporate women into his political framework is evident in the unequal social power they possess, shaped by disparities in wealth, education, laws, and socio-cultural practices. These conditions make it difficult for women to reimagine their agency and rightful space in society. This paper argues that Rousseau's vision of the state will ultimately falter because the non-contribution of women weakens its development. By promoting an unopposed rule of men, Rousseau's theory undermines the potential for a more just and equitable society. For the state to thrive, women must be situated with equal autonomy and respect alongside other members of society, ensuring their full participation in its growth and governance.

**Keywords:** *agency; general will; moral; Rousseau; women*

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Jean Jacques Rousseau's Social Contract theory emphasizes the idea that individuals are autonomous agents of morality, functioning within a community where they act as both citizens and legislators. In this society, individuals are self-sufficient, exercise their rights, and play an active role in shaping the laws that govern them. Rousseau argued for the protection of each person's dignity and resources while upholding the rule of law. However, when it came to women, Rousseau's vision fell short. Women were underestimated and deemed lacking the necessary skills to participate in a democratic society. Their voices were marginalized, and their needs were not fully considered within the civic and political framework. This paper aims to critically examine how women can be integrated into Rousseau's model of civic and political virtue, highlighting the gaps in his treatment of gender equality.

### **French Revolution**

The orderly institutions of Continental Europe were significantly influenced by the revolutionary movement in France. Various scholars have interpreted this influence in different ways. Some view it as a mark of the rise of rationalism in Europe, while others see it as a revolt by a populace long oppressed under a corrupt system. The core issue was the lack of a bridge between the people and the monarchy, which led to widespread discontent. It became essential to prove that the old system was defective, thus necessitating a search for a new one. As Lincoln explains, "the medieval feudal monarchy was thus replaced by later absolutism; and the papal hierarchy was replaced, where discarded, by Deism or Atheism, rather than by the Protestant compromises found in other countries" (Lincoln, 1897, p. 55).

During the French Revolution, one of Rousseau's key proposals was the advancement of a government that derived its power from the consent of its citizens. According to Lincoln, Rousseau argued that "when the state has been formed by the express or implied consent of its members, justice becomes the rule of action for the people, and there is a true harmony of interests among them" (Lincoln, 1897, p. 58). For Rousseau, justice operates on conscience and influences people's actions. He insisted that for a state to function smoothly and harmoniously, it must consider the needs of all its citizens, including women. As in democratic institutions, Rousseau suggested that individuals should have the right to accept or reject prescribed laws;

similarly, women should be granted the liberty to do the same. He believed that a tyrannical approach, where any group is marginalized, would not be conducive to good governance. For Rousseau, justice was the guiding force in social relations, not wealth or family ties. Rousseau's social contract expected individuals to become morally perfect and politically capable.

In his works *Julie*, *Emile*, and *The Social Contract*, Rousseau explores various aspects of social relations and governance. In *Julie*, he examines the familial relationships necessary for societal harmony; in *Emile*, he addresses how individuals can fulfill their social and political duties; and in *The Social Contract*, he discusses methods of governance. Lincoln notes that while these three works do not individually provide a complete or practical system of national life, together they offer a comprehensive framework for understanding Rousseau's vision of society (Lincoln, 1897, p. 63). However, these ideal social schemes have often been criticized as impractical for realization.

Rousseau's works became central to Enlightenment discussions of liberty, equality, political representation, and property. These ideas provided the theoretical and moral justification for the European colonies in the Americas when they began declaring independence (Wasserman, 1994, p. 71). According to Todorov, however, Rousseau's focus was not on "otherness" but rather on building a cultural self (Wokler, 1996, p. 48). Although Rousseau's ideas were often opposed by state and church authorities, they still resonated with the masses due to their cultural rather than political appeal. His language connected more with people's cultural consciousness.

Rousseau believed that human nature allowed room for moral legitimacy, which involved nurturing virtue rather than blindly accepting historical authority. Wasserman notes that Rousseau's ideas were accepted by countries like Europe and America, where new nations defined themselves based on Rousseau's positive values, emphasizing the nobility of nature and the importance of forming a virtuous society (Wasserman, 1994, p. 90). His works *Emile*, *La Nouvelle Heloise*, and *The Social Contract* all dealt with the development of individuals who retained their primitive virtues while being socialized into the conventions of society. In Rousseau's vision, people marry not for love, but to fulfill civic duties and bring harmony between nature and human order.



Wasserman describes Rousseau's moral and political ideals in metaphorical terms, comparing the harmony of a household's organization to the beauty of a garden. Rousseau's gardens, like those in *Julie and Emile*, represent the uncorrupted spaces where men and women live in purity. However, within these ideal spaces, Rousseau introduces figures of almost absolute power, such as the husband, the tutor, or the prince, whose authority derives from their moral qualities and requires the reasoned acquiescence of their subjects (Wasserman, 1994, p. 90).

In *Emile*, Rousseau emphasizes individual development, drawing an analogy between realizing one's potential and the growth of a state (Doyle & Smith, 2013). He believed that the ideal educator must promote both the personal and social needs of the individual. Physical endurance, cultivated through deprivation and physical challenges, was seen as essential for developing a sound body and mind. Rousseau's ideal citizen would be shaped by practical experiences, such as learning to tie shoelaces or cultivate land, which were symbolic of a state's early development. Virtues like trust and generosity, Rousseau insisted, should be taught through experience rather than theory.

### **Rousseau's Attempt to Remodel the Society**

Rousseau was known for his sensitive and emotional temperament, which led him to resist regulatory institutions. His personal struggles, marked by unhappiness and emotional upheaval, found expression in his writings on moral, religious, and political matters. While Voltaire and Montesquieu played pivotal roles in stirring revolutionary sentiments, Rousseau sought to remodel both society and the state. He was deeply influenced by the virtuous ideals of the Greek and Roman republics, and his work often reflected these influences.

In *Discourse on Inequality*, Rousseau suggests that the state of nature is an ahistorical rather than a psychological concept. His approach may seem like Hobbes' in its exploration of the primitive state, but it is more focused on the transformation from a state of peace to social service. According to Dunning, Rousseau traces the development of primitive man into a philosophical ideal, emphasizing that the human mind begins as simple but, over time, forms opinions and habits through rational judgment (Dunning, 1909).

By focusing on the development of the human mind, Rousseau distanced himself from other philosophical traditions of his time, which posited that liberty arose from being driven by passion, while oppression came from being governed by reason. Dunning (1909) explains: “The relation of the individual will to the general will ensure at the least the equality of all citizens before the law, and the rule of justice and equity” (p. 396). However, this relationship between individual will and general will becomes problematic in Rousseau’s view of women. The rule of justice, according to Rousseau, does not apply equally to women, as they are not granted equal representation in the public sphere. Rousseau argues that women do not have an active will because their representation and rights are not recognized on the same level as men’s. For Rousseau, private motivations should be sacrificed for the greater good. He believed that women should take up domestic roles to support the state by assisting their husbands in fulfilling their duties. This leads to a form of constitutionalism that appears partial, particularly in the context of gender. In a republican society, Rousseau stressed the importance of learning the art of austerity to cultivate personal virtue. The self-worth and individuality of citizens must be recognized, and moral desirability should be based on the principles of justice. Such principles, he argued, should guide citizens in deliberation, whether as individuals or officials.

Rousseau’s political ideas needed to be applied to specific local contexts—economic, social, cultural, and environmental—for them to succeed. Daly compares citizens’ allegiance to reason, free from private interest, with Rawls’ concept of the ‘Original Position’. Rawls, like Rousseau, emphasizes deliberation for the common good: “This is accessible to reasonable citizens capable of abstracting their public reasons and justifications from their contingent features, capacities, and resources: it is formulated from a standpoint of deliberative summary” (Daly, 2013, p. 4). Rousseau’s political philosophy, however, asserts that women cannot deliberate on public matters, which casts doubt on their ability to engage in matters of justice. Men, on the other hand, are assumed to possess the ability to work in both the public and private spheres.

This view, however, is conservative and does not account for the inequalities faced by women. Individuals often struggle between fulfilling their duties and their desires, and virtue is tied to the strength of will. In civil

society, weakness is overcome through a balance between social desires and rational duty in citizenship. The rational component of the general will does not consider personal interests but rather prioritizes the common good. Citizenship, in Rousseau's view, is built on two pillars: patriotism and education. Education provides an autonomous understanding of oneself and society, while patriotism strengthens one's contribution to the general will. A law expressing reason without coercion fosters a sense of belonging among citizens. Despite this, Rousseau's emphasis on patriotism also reinforces inequalities at the familial level. Salvat (2008) argues that "Rousseau's political philosophy, designed to remedy the shortcomings of the Enlightenment's universalism, partly fails to free itself from the social and sexual prejudices that the domestic model conveys. This paradoxically proves how a system designated to defend the ideas of autonomy and equality can rely on traditional preconceptions of the family as a natural and unequal community" (p. 15).

Women, in Rousseau's framework, are placed in a contradictory position. While the household is considered an essential part of civic society, it is systematically alienated from direct involvement in public life. Women are thus excluded from full participation in the public domain, despite being integral to the functioning of the state within the domestic sphere. This alienation leaves them marginalized and denied a full civic identity.

The first wave of feminism arose from a similar sense of discontent, as women demanded the replacement of the old patriarchal system with a new, more equitable structure. The calls for political equality, including demands for divorce laws and abortion rights, reflected the desire to correct past oppressive practices. However, any transformation of the societal structure requires a solid foundation to ensure its sustainability. Rousseau's advocacy for an ideal moral and social setup, particularly in Julie, appears unrealistic. The expectation that individuals should abandon personal desires to conform to a moral and ideal society is seen as unreasonable, especially in the context of Julie, where such ideals are demeaning to one's individuality. Over time, changes in ideology, geography, and the political and economic needs of a country can render such rigid ideals obsolete.

## **Analysis**

### **A. Psychological Wholeness**

Rousseau promotes the idea of structuring domesticity based on the

model of the public realm, but this is difficult to achieve because both realms are partial towards men. Rousseau expresses these opinions in *Emile* and *Julie*. In *Emile*, the education of a citizen must resonate with his identity as a man. To harmonize the relationship between the self and society, *Emile* is to receive two types of education: civic education, which instills an understanding of belonging to a common unity, and political education, which is defined by one's connection to their homeland. Political systems are not the sole determinant of political character; they must adapt to cultural circumstances to create unity. Rousseau suggests that becoming a moral agent depends on being an engaged citizen. Nicole Fermon adds that *Julie* portrays the private aspects of an individual, which were left out of *The Social Contract*. By staying at Clarens, characters cultivate the moral habits necessary for good citizenship (Fermon, 1997).

It is not always easy to function in a political society. Associational lives—interactions with parents, children, colleagues, and spouses—can create disruptions in personal identities, which decenter the social harmony that Rousseau projects in society. Warner terms Rousseau's state as a "moral ecology," in which psychological wholeness can be provided to citizens, as it exists in the pure state of nature. A good individual thrives within a larger ordered whole. Rousseau argues that the end of political corruption depends on citizens' attachment to both public and private spheres (Warner, 2015).

When individuals enter civil and political life, they restructure it to fit their personal agency. This restructuring presents challenges, particularly for women in Rousseau's prearranged domestic institutions. As Frederick Neuhouser (2008) emphasizes, Rousseau's education for *Emile* is consistent with making him both a citizen and a man (Neuhouser, 2008, pp. 21-24).

Rousseau's political thought seeks to balance different forces to establish social life. However, he clarifies that politics alone does not shape individuals into moral agents. In his works, individuals continuously make efforts to fit into society and become successful members. They may eventually find satisfaction in a political community. His political works aim to fulfill the psychological and environmental expectations of unity. Bronfenbrenner (1979) notes that an individual's identity is influenced by their surroundings, and multiple social roles can create identity conflicts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, pp. 522-523).

Rousseau's thought attempts to answer the psychological conflicts of dividedness when faced with dilemmas. These are not isolated cases; such principles create problems in thought and behavior. Resolving difficult choices requires regulative principles to govern them. These principles furnish a particular life plan, provide consistency in social and moral life, and help form a moral identity. In *Letter à d'Alembert*, Rousseau criticizes those who believe that human good can be realized through narrow self-interest and instead values coherent life decisions that reconcile public and private good, liberty, and equality. Failing to follow these principles leads to selfishness, which is destructive to both the soul and society (Rousseau, 1758). Women, however, are expected to adhere to patriarchal notions, devoting their lives to raising citizens while remaining in the shadows. They are not presented with the same dilemmas of choice because they are coerced into choosing the private sphere. The depiction of women in *Julie and Emile* reflects this misogynistic perspective. Rousseau's attempt to model private life on public grounds fails because, in personal relationships, dividedness is caused by sexism. The public realm, however, quickly opposes partiality, with men being better informed about their rights. Women, on the other hand, are conditioned to sacrifice personal fulfillment for others (Fermon, 1997).

When a woman enters political and social life, she is not a finished product; she is guided by natural interests. Being free is an existential value for an individual, accompanied by self-love and pity. However, as society becomes more interdependent, human interdependence takes this freedom away. The right sociological structure can prevent destructive traits from emerging under the governance of law. Yet, social harmony within each person reflects unity, similar to the natural state, indicating that one's environment plays a more fundamental role than social institutions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, pp. 526-528).

Bronfenbrenner emphasizes embeddedness in political thought, where individuals are situated within a structure rather than functioning freely. A person's psychological unity is shaped by their environment, where harmoniousness and comprehensiveness drive their development. Embeddedness initially stems from the need for self-preservation, as people's needs for food, water, and sexual partners are fulfilled. As environmental changes occur, new needs arise, disrupting earlier ones. Self-love and pity

also become expressed in the environment. The pure state of nature ceases to exist as everyone assumes the role of political subjects fulfilling their obligations as citizens. Individuals are placed in inescapable social structures where they act as parents, spouses, churchgoers, and friends, causing identity conflicts and division. To achieve psychological unity, reconciling these obligations becomes crucial (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Freedom is essential to Rousseau's political thought as it contributes to the development of individual wholeness. Isaiah Berlin, in *Two Concepts of Liberty*, captures Rousseau's broader thinking, arguing that in Rousseau's moral doctrine, the autonomous self is realized for self-governance. Berlin distinguishes between negative and positive freedoms. Negative rights prevent others from interfering with a person's activities, while positive rights compel others to provide goods that one needs. Positive rights, such as education and medical care, are defended in this context (Garrett, 2001). John Rawls further explores this, suggesting that positive claims can be authoritarian. For Rousseau, moral freedom is equated with obedience to the law, where law and morality are complementary. Citizens create their capacities within a new environment to fulfill their civic duty. Rousseau believed that love for the state emerged from sacrificing one's selfhood, and the negative form of freedom allowed citizens to remain protected from damaging social forces (Rawls, 1971).

To act on one's principles, Rousseau asserts, individuals must give up natural rights for civil freedom. Moral identities are shaped by people's environments. Rousseau also highlights the fragility of human happiness, as disturbances in one's environment can have irreversible effects. Julie, for example, tells St. Preux that life is fragile, and even one deviation can disrupt a straight path. The psychological and sociological costs of mistakes are significant. Rousseau emphasizes the role of a legislator in enforcing moral authority, as seen in the character of Wolmer in *Julie* and the teacher in *Emile*. Organic development must also be effective, as Rousseau's moral universe is always on the margin of error, where even the slightest deviation from justice disrupts the entire social and political structure (Rousseau, 1761). Rousseau distinguishes between the psychological foundations of friendship and those of romantic love, creating a relatively impermeable separation between the two. Transitioning from one to the other is fraught with uncertainty, requiring a comprehensive psychic reorientation. This

process involves transforming how we “see” another person (Rousseau, 1761, p. 127).

Romantic love stirs people's imagination, often intensifying misery. Marriage without love, Rousseau argues, is suffocating, while love without marriage leaves life undefined. Warner (2015) contends that love creates new social and psychological possibilities but also forecloses those very possibilities, making individuals no happier with love than without it. This, Warner argues, is the teaching of Julie (Warner, 2015, p. 129). By exploring this area, Rousseau problematizes the image of a happy household, linking it to the domestic and political realm. Families serve as socializing agents, cultivating the moral and social habits necessary for maintaining political health. The relationship between the domestic and political spheres is critical in *Emile and Julie*, as Rousseau argues that a stable family structure provides a stable foundation for moral training (Rousseau, 1761).

## **B. Social Connectedness**

Durkheim critiques Rousseau's notion that the state of nature is pure, and that civilization corrupts human beings. He argues that Rousseau's theory becomes contradictory when he promotes a positive social organization where morality and other human social concepts flourish (Cladis, 1993, p. 11). Durkheim points out that Rousseau's arguments in *The Social Contract* are inconsistent, as Rousseau advocates for both the purity of the natural state and the necessity of societal organization. Charles Taylor also addresses Rousseau's contradictions. He questions how Rousseau can claim that individuals are authentic yet promote inauthenticity by urging people to act according to the will of others. Taylor observes that men when acting according to others' wills, are seen as assertive leaders, while women, when doing the same, are viewed as meek and seeking approval. This double standard obstructs the development of ethical behavior, particularly when confronted with injustice. According to Taylor, morality can only truly develop in a just social context.

Gupta draws parallels between Rousseau's stages of development and Kierkegaard's philosophy. While Kierkegaard sees ethics as a path toward becoming an ideal person, Rousseau emphasizes that our relationships with others fundamentally shape who we are. For Rousseau, the development of self is intertwined with social interactions. When it comes to women, these

social interactions are marked by injustice, as they face subjugation by men, which restricts their ability to exercise freedom. External influences distort women's sense of morality, leaving them confused about their place in society. Their life choices become constrained by rigid societal structures, making it difficult for them to listen to their conscience and fully engage with their social context. As a result, women's ability to reason independently is obstructed.

Rousseau places significant value on the relationship between individuals and their environment. Modernity, he argues, has created a divide between public and private realms, forcing individuals to face constant conflicts between the two. Rousseau sought to restore harmony by reflecting the natural order in society. However, it remains challenging to determine how well social institutions can truly align with the human soul, given the complexities of human existence. The notion that women are inherently closer to nature than men is a myth. Being assigned the role of caregiver does not inherently connect women to nature. Environmental and ethics scholar Chris Cuomo (2020) argues that women's understanding of nature stems from the work they are made to do, which cultivates sensitivity and empathy. According to Cuomo, "there is moral knowledge present for women, not because of being in a female body, but because of what female bodies are made to do" (Cuomo, 2020).

Rousseau emphasizes that civic life thrives under authoritative guidance and that morality is cultivated through the exercise of virtues. He critiques materialism for offering only superficial gratification, as it does not help regulate the General Will. Interestingly, while women are often accused of indulgence, this largely reflects the demands imposed on them by men.

### **A Critique of Rousseau's Gender Framework**

The paper bases the gender critical review of an exclusion that forms part of Rousseau's model of General Will model as established in *The Social Contract* (1762), a threshold in modern political philosophy. He defined General Will that aims for a common good that lies beyond individual interests. He claims equality and justice among citizens; however, the definition of "citizens" does not include women. Rousseau talks about active citizenship as the men's privilege, grounded in rationality and autonomy, traits he believed women



lacked. Rousseau states, "The duties of women are more modest. They are intended to please, be useful to men, and render life sweet and agreeable to them" (Emile, 19762/2019, p. 287). Thus, by denying women a political life, he ends up with an internal contradiction in his philosophy: he talks of universal equality while perpetually upholding gender discrimination in society.

Understanding Rousseau isn't about the exclusion of women. It's a matter of aligning these ideas with the historical patterns and cultural templates across Europe in the 18th century. The entire world was marked then, with set rigid gender roles, where men were seen in the public light and women in a private domain. Rousseau's discourse should thus be seen in that light and not think that he was an aberration from the mainstream view of his time. Brown (2015) comments; "Rousseau's vision of the social contract must be read within the framework of a society that was overwhelmingly patriarchal, where women's subordination was not only accepted but institutionalized" (p. 78). Above all, even though this does not exonerate him from the problem of inclusiveness, this could also entail a cultural explanation of the constraints that formed ideas within him.

Besides, Rousseau's views on education as discussed, in Emile further reinforce the societal norm that the overall function of women was to serve men and give birth to children. "The entire education of women ought to be relative to men. To please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honored by them, to raise them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, to make their lives agreeable and sweet" (Emile, 1762/2019, p. 289). Such statements exemplify how thick the roots of Rousseau's philosophy are entrenched in the gendered expectations of his era.

The idea of Rousseau's General Will has raised significant concerns regarding the relevance and adaptability of his ideology to modern debates on gender equality; for indeed that framework was born in his time, even its patriarchal underpinnings constitute challenges in modern society, where all genders have become fundamental in political and social life. Its critics have alleged that Rousseau's relegation of women in the private sphere undermined their agency and contributions to the public domain. Pateman (1988) says, "The social contract, as Rousseau envisions it, is inherently gendered. It presupposes a division between public and private life that excludes women from political equality" (p. 102). In the context of contemporary feminist

thought, Rousseau's framework was deemed to be inadequate in capturing the complexities of gender relations in modern society. However, several have attempted a feminist critique of Rousseau's thought, arguing that his attention to moral development and education could offer grounds for gender equality. According to Taylor (2018), "If Rousseau's principles of moral and political perfection were extended to include women, his philosophy could serve as a basis for a more inclusive vision of citizenship" (p. 156).

Economically, Rousseau's position on women aligns with his broader vision of a classless society, but he fails to extend this vision to gender relations. While he advocates for economic equality among men, his ideas implicitly preserve the economic dependence of women on men. Women are consigned to the domestic economy, where their labor is unpaid and undervalued, reinforcing their subordinate status. Rousseau's model does not provide women with the opportunity to participate in the public economy, further cementing their reliance on male providers. This economic exclusion is closely tied to their lack of political and educational rights, creating a cycle of dependence that restricts women from achieving economic autonomy or contributing to the economic development of society.

## **Discussion**

Moral education and individualization form an important foundation for freeing women. In *Emile*, education becomes the sine qua non for virtuous citizenship in the General Will. Although he confines his prescriptions for women's education to certain domestic roles, his principles include reason, empathy, and moral autonomy under a more general education program. A feminist interpretation of Rousseau's educational philosophy would demonstrate that women, like men, could also benefit from education of a character that develops critical thinking and self-governance. Taylor argues, "If Rousseau's principles of education were applied equally to women, they could develop the moral and intellectual qualities necessary for active citizenship" (2018, p. 156). This reinterpretation takes on the gendered restrictions of Rousseau's framework, raising education as an avenue to empowerment. Thus, by extending his educational philosophy to cover women, Rousseau's framework could give an impetus for their liberation and participation as rational and autonomous individuals in the General Will.

One possible reinterpretation of Rousseau's framework on women's emancipation lies in the dimension of their activism in both public and private

capacities. Although Rousseau idealizes women as moral guides within the family, the role can be construed beyond the domestic sphere into contributions to society as well as political contexts. The nurturing, empathetic characteristics that he cherishes in women can allude to strengths that complement women's roles in governance and public life and strengthen their position economically.

According to Jones (2020), "Rousseau's emphasis on moral virtue and community can be reinterpreted to value women's unique perspectives and contributions to the public sphere" (p. 67). This idea takes from present-day feminist theories that require the institution of a most commonly feminine characteristic adduced by political and social authorities.

Reconstructing the role of women requires tearing down barriers that spell conventionally domestic. Possibilities would escape bounds like Rousseau's to become models for gender-equity governance through the emancipation of education, employment, and political participation. However, if there should be any drawbacks for Rousseau's exclusion of women from economic dependency, he visualizes men as the providers and women as dependent. This results in very poor confinement or subordination by tying up women's financial independence and restricting access to resources. Therefore, economic empowerment becomes one of the most essential conditions of gender equality, as it would give women the autonomy to exercise their contribution to society. Providing women with the skills and resources needed to be economically independent makes it easy to borrow from Rousseau's principles concerning self-reliance and moral development on behalf of women's liberation.

Brown (2015) comments "Economic empowerment is essential for dismantling the patriarchal structures that confine women to subordinate roles, and Rousseau's emphasis on individual capability could be extended to include women's economic agency" (p. 134).

Indeed, Rousseau's philosophy erects formidable barriers to women's emancipation, but it also admits avenues of critique and adaptation. A re-reading of his notion of equality, moral upbringing, and general decision-making can be turned into a challenging voice opposing the patriarchal meaning that remains quite entrenched in his body of work. An example of such a

reinterpretation would be feminist reinterpretations of Rousseau's text that would likely bring light to the contradictions to his exclusion of women and advocate for a more gender-sensitive application of his theories enabling women as active members of society.

### **Limitations and Obstacles**

Despite the possibility of reinterpretation, there seem to be many more limiting factors in Rousseau's foundation for gender equality. His very foundations of philosophy are also deeply embedded into the patriarchal modes of this age, making it almost impossible to disentangle his thoughts from their ancient meanings. Furthermore, his interpretation of different gender roles reflects a worldview that might be against current feminist theories.

Pateman (1988), therefore, expounds on these threats, thereby declaring, "Rousseau's vision of the social contract is inherently gendered, and its adaptation to modern contexts requires a fundamental rethinking of its core assumptions" (89). This rethinking is not just added to including women under Rousseau's principles but moves beyond this to scrutinize the historically and culturally constructed biases that influenced his thought.

### **Conclusion**

- Warner asserts that the morality of justice and virtue is guided by conscience.
- Rousseau argues that moral feelings within society lead to a good life.
- According to Rousseau, without passion, reason cannot emerge.

Rousseau advocates for shielding individual autonomy from the constraints of society, but this stance contrasts sharply with his treatment of women's moral autonomy. While *The Social Contract* includes men, women, and children as part of a comprehensive society, women are largely excluded from exercising personal freedom within this framework. Though many regard Rousseau as a romantic philosopher, his notion of self is often caught in the tension between theological ideals and societal expectations.

In *Emile*, Rousseau attempts to construct an intellectual system that fosters the conditions for a happy marriage, offering a framework for moral love through social incorporation. The narrative reflects Rousseau's vision of instilling natural independence in men to shape them as autonomous

individuals. However, his attempt to harmonize the private and public spheres is riddled with complexities. In his framework, the governance within a family is paralleled with societal governance, where all individuals relinquish their Particular Will to function either in the estate of Clarens (as seen in Julie) or within marriage (as seen in Emile). Nevertheless, the female characters in these stories interpret their moral identities differently from their male counterparts, leading to a moral outlook that is partial and constrained.

In conclusion, Rousseau's perspective on the moral worth of women, when viewed through these lenses, exposes significant shortcomings in his vision of equality. Although he advocates for a classless society, his philosophy excludes women from the full benefits of equality, confining them to roles shaped by perceived biological and emotional differences. In Rousseau's view, women primarily serve the public good through their subordination in the private sphere, reflecting broader societal patterns of inequality rooted in patriarchal structures (Isser, 2024).

Rousseau's philosophy, despite its weaknesses, leaves open the possibility of reinterpreting it. His advocacy of moral education and the development of virtuous citizens could be leveraged to call for women's inclusion in the General Will. Rethinking Rousseau to match up with contemporary values of equality and justice would leave his ideas open for adaptation through an acknowledgment of women's equal moral and intellectual capacities. An example of how this paper could proceed would be to see how Rousseau's principles of collective decision-making are instituted such that the contributions made by all genders have been valued. Jones (2020) suggests, "A feminist reinterpretation of Rousseau's philosophy could emphasize the shared moral and political capabilities of men and women, challenging the traditional dichotomy between public and private spheres" (p. 43). This will require a re-engagement with the writings of Rousseau, allowing for a critical ear to be kept by reading their historical environments but reinventing them for contemporary applicability. This will not only take care of the limitations placed by Rousseau's philosophy but also contribute to ongoing debates regarding gender equality in political theory.

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### **Style Sheet & references to published works**

Numbers : Use 'p.' for single page 'pp' for multiple pages. Use the minimum number of digits for page(s), e.g. pp.46-9, not pp.46-49, pp.232-283. For numbers between 10-19, follow the format 11-13, 15-18, not 11-13, 15-18. For dates use 1938-8, not 1934-1938.

**Reference** : One may either use the in-text parenthetical referencing or End-note referencing but not both. Sources cited for reference must be according to the following formats [ Take note that '<-->' indicates any variable, '-' indicates a space and in the following others should be understood as usually.]

**For in-text parenthetical referencing** : 1. Starting round bracket <author's name or surname>\_< year of publication>:\_<page number(s)> ending round bracket and full stop. Example : (John 2002:10-36).

If the last name is confusing take two words, e.g.(RAMA murti 1924:42). For consecutive repetition of any part of the same source mention 'ibid' in italics and provide other non-repeated parts, e.g.(ibid:30)

Multiple in text references are to be separated by semicolon for example,(Prasad 1995 :12-43; Mohanty 2008 :32). For more than two authored sources mention first two, or the Chief editor and write 'et al'.

2. If only one source is referred to throughout as in Book Reviews then only page number is sufficient within parenthesis, but the first reference must be mentioned as usually.

3. For all in-text sources full bibliographic data should be provided at the end-note referring, but except mentioning the round brackets (see below).

4. One may use abbreviation of the sources throughout instead of author's name, but must define it with full bibliographic note at the end-note area.

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