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Elvira Šimfa

Being Moral and Loving Oneself. Kant on Morality, Self-Love and Self-Conceit

Kant famously states that teachings of morality “command for everyone, without taking account of his inclinations, merely because and insofar as he is free and has practical reason”¹. This follows from two premises of Kant’s moral theory: (1) that morality is entirely based on reason and therefore valid for all rational beings (humans being only a part of this group) and (2) inclinations are not to be trusted, and this is so in two senses: (2.1) guidelines for action derived from inclinations are contingent and (2.2) inclinations are mostly opposed to reason and attempt to corrupt its commands and their execution.² So when it comes to morality there is a severe tension

¹ **Kant, Immanuel.** *The Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by **Mary Gregor**. Cambridge University Press, 1991. – Pp. 44. (*MdS* 6: 216)

² 2.1. Is based on Kant’s mistrust in all principles of empirical origin which results from epistemic problem he ascribes to all knowledge derived from experience. He states it in the Introduction of the first *Critique* (see: **Kant, Immanuel.** *Critique of the Pure Reason*. Translated and edited by **Paul Guyer** and **Allen W. Wood**. Cambridge University Press, 1998. – Pp. 137.) (*KrV* 3: 28 - 29))

2.2. Results from Kant’s account on the constitution of human beings. Because they are not only rational but also sensible beings, their sensible nature and inclinations stemming from it do not necessarily accord with requests of reason. Therefore a being that is rational and sensible cannot be entirely free to follow his reason because his will is always opened to the influences of inclinations which might require just the opposite of what reason demands. Kant writes: “being a creature and hence always dependent with regard to what he requires for complete satisfaction with his state, he can never be entirely free from desires and inclinations. These, because they rest on physical causes, do not by themselves harmonize with the moral law, which has entirely different sources.” (**Kant, Immanuel.** *Critique of the Practical Reason*. Translated by **Werner S. Pluhar**. Hackett Publishing Company, 2002. – Pp. 108. (*KpV* 5: 84)) Now, precisely because

between reason and inclinations; their harmony is problematic since one or the other has to rule: “for unless reason holds the reins of government in his own hands, man’s feelings and inclinations play the master over him”³.

This tension does not have to be extrapolated to all human moral life. In fact, taking into account different kinds of inclinations – self-love and self-conceit, it can be reduced to relationship between morality and self-conceit. Self-love is not opposed to morality; it does not tempt to “hold the reins of government”. It is by its very nature an inclination that aims at happiness of an agent that is not only sensible but also moral and who, in order to be happy, has to balance the satisfaction of his moral consciousness and of the desires steaming from his sensible nature. And by doing so he has to deny something to himself in order to avoid greater dissatisfaction. The fact that he can do so and still achieve satisfaction is due to particular nature of self-love. Therefore self-love can be seen as preparing human beings to submit to moral commands in order to further their moral interests which constitute a significant part of the idea human beings make of their general well-being.

In what follows I will explain the difference between self-love and self-conceit, show their relationship to morality and offer a brief interpretation of the nature of self-love. I will argue that inclinations as considered in 2.2 are inclinations understood as self-conceit. Inclinations considered as self-love can not only accord with reason and commands of morality but also, given its nature, enable human beings to obey the commands of morality which often require self-denial.

Self-love also contributes to development of moral feelings which, as Kant thinks, have to accompany and further moral deeds.

human beings depend on their sensibility and have to satisfy at least some of their inclinations and because the inclinations, being of an “entirely different sources” than reason, can also demand something entirely different, the dependency can result in corruption of the commands of reason and morality if these commands threaten the satisfaction of inclinations.

³ Kant, Immanuel. *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 208. (*MdS* 6: 408).

a. Two kinds of inclinations: self-love and self-conceit

In the first section of *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) Kant explains that when acting from duty the will is objectively determined by the law and subjectively by “*pure respect* for this practical law”⁴. He defines respect as “the representation of a worth that infringes (*Abbruch tut*) on my self-love (*Selbstliebe*)”⁵. Self-love is a sum of inclinations aiming at one’s happiness.

Roughly speaking, the “infringing” on the self-love is considered in two ways in *Groundwork*: either as its restriction or its exclusion. This means that self-love is thought either to be compatible with morality or not. As compatible with morality, it has to be restricted, which means it cannot be a principle of adopting maxims but it is acceptable if it accords with the moral law as this principle. Self-love is not compatible with morality when it is made a principle of adopting maxims. So whenever self-love tends to become the principle of adopting maxims and acting on them it conflicts with the moral law and then either the “dear self, which is always thrusting itself forward” is preferred or “duty, which would often demand self-renunciation”⁶. In this situation subject is faced with, as Otfried Höffe puts it, “the decisive alternative of ‘duty or inclination’”⁷.

Both aspects of self-love are closely connected. For, to restrict self-love so that it accords with the law as principle of actions means to exclude it as such a principle. But there is also an important difference: self-love does not always exercise a tendency to become the principle of action otherwise it would not be possible to satisfy it unless it would be made the sole determining ground of actions (as it is in the case of morality). Thus it could not be restricted by the law and still be satisfied. But Kant

⁴ **Kant, Immanuel.** *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Edited and translated by **Allen W. Wood**. Yale University Press, 2002. – Pp. 16. (*Gr 4*: 400)

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17. (*Gr 4*: 401)

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23. (*Gr 4*: 407)

⁷ **Höffe, Otfried.** *Kant’s Critique of the Pure Reason. The Foundation of Modern Philosophy*. Studies in German Idealism. Vol. 10. Springer, 2009. – Pp. 296.

holds that self-love can be successfully satisfied also under the guidance of the moral law:

“so many charms and agreeablenesses in life can quite readily be linked with this incentive that even just on their account the most prudent choice of a reasonable *Epicurean* – meditating on the greatest well-being of life – would declare itself for morally good conduct”⁸.

Kant introduces these two aspects of self-love when discussing the incentives of moral action in *Critique of the Practical Reason* (1788), here the more general term for the sum of inclinations is selfishness; self-love is only its mode:

“All inclinations (*Neigungen*) together (which presumably can also be brought into a tolerable system, and the satisfaction of which is then called one’s own happiness) amount to *selfishness* (*Selbstsucht*) (*solipsismus*). This is either that of *self-love*, a paramount *benevolence* toward oneself (*philautia*), or that of liking for oneself (*arrogantia*). Specifically the former is called *love for oneself* (*Eigenliebe*), the latter *conceit for oneself* (*Eigendünkel*).”⁹

Self-love is described as natural and “even prior to the moral law”. It can be restricted by the law and brought in accordance with it and so far it can be called rational self-love. But self-conceit “pure practical reason strikes down altogether”¹⁰.

The reason why moral law differently addresses self-love and self-conceit is the different worth each of them ascribe to the sensible self. Kant calls it the “pathologically determinable self” who claims to be “primary and original”¹¹.

⁸ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Practical Reason*, p. 113. (*KpV* 5: 88)

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 96. (*KpV* 5: 73)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 97. (*KpV* 5: 74)

Self-conceit is restricted to this self and ascribes to it an unconditional and therefore an absolute¹² worth. The worth of sensible self is not conditioned by its relationship to moral self. Who suffers from self-conceit considers his worth independently from being moral. Therefore his rule is to act in a way that promises satisfaction of the sensible self, namely, it is a “legislative and an unconditional practical principle”¹³. For this reason there is no way in which the moral law can coexist with self-conceit and therefore strikes it down.

Self-love can turn into self-conceit for it has a “propensity to make oneself [...] an objective determining basis of the will”¹⁴, namely, as Henry Allison puts it, “tendency to find a reason to act in what promises satisfaction”¹⁵. But self-love by its nature is not *restricted* to the sensible self. Here I agree with Sharon Anderson-Gold:

¹² I use the term “absolute” here in the meaning Kant ascribes to it in *Critique of the Pure Reason*: “The word *absolute* is now more often used merely to indicate that something is valid of a thing considered *in itself* and thus *internally*. In this meaning, “absolutely possible” would signify what is possible in itself (internally), which is in fact the *least* one can say of an object. On the contrary, however, it is also sometimes used to indicate that something is valid in every relation (unlimitedly) (e.g. absolute domination); and in this meaning *absolutely possible* would signify what is *possible* in all respects *in every relation*, which is again the *most* that I can say about a possibility of a thing.” (**Kant, Immanuel**. *Critique of the Pure Reason*, p. 401. (*KrV* 3: 252)) Kant goes on explaining that these meanings coincide only sometimes, “but in most cases they are infinitely far apart from each other, and so I can by no means infer that because something is possible in itself it is therefore also possible in every relation, hence absolutely possible” (*Ibid.*) He himself states that he will “make use of the word *absolute*, opposing to what is merely comparative, or valid in some particular respect; for the later is restricted to conditions, while the former is valid without any restriction.” (*Ibid.*, p. 401. (*KrV* 3: 253))

I take his use of the word “absolute” as suitable to show that in self-conceit the pathological self is valid without any restriction by a condition, therefore that it has an unconditional worth. That does not exclude the first meaning, namely, the one that refers to internal validity.

¹³ **Kant, Immanuel**. *Critique of the Practical Reason*, p. 97 - 98. (*KpV* 5: 74)

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ **Allison, Henry**. *Kant's Theory of Freedom*, p. 124.

“In contrast to much traditional interpretation, which views self-love as an “egoistic” manifestation of the desires of an isolated individual, I maintain that Kant does not limit self-love to the interests of a physical self.”¹⁶

And because self-love is not limited to the physical (the sensible or the pathological) self, it ascribes to this self only a conditioned worth (not absolute in the second meaning of the term described in note Nr. 12).

Self-love, as explained previously, aims at the satisfaction of a sum of inclinations one has, namely, at happiness. This means – it aims at ones greatest possible satisfaction. Human being, the one who longs for happiness, is a sensible and moral being and there is no reason to presuppose that the greatest satisfaction of such a being could be achieved by satisfying only his sensible nature, the moral nature has to be satisfied as well. Therefore the worth that self-love ascribes to the sensible nature or sensible self is conditioned by the necessity to attune it with the moral self.

The crucial point to understand the phenomenon of self-love (and therefore – to understand how it differs from self-conceit) is to see the subject of self-love not as a merely moral or merely sensible subject (and not as an aggregate constituted by these two parts) but to see it, as Paul Guyer puts it, as a “fully embodied rational agent”¹⁷. If the subject of self-love is seen as such, than self-love being tied to the fact of embodiment is simply failing its task for it has to aim at the satisfaction of a subject who is more than just embodied.

Given previously described subject, I assume that self-conceit is a fallacious case of self-love. It fails to recognize the moral nature of this subject which requires precisely the opposite way of thinking than self-conceit presupposes. The way of thinking that one has when captured in

¹⁶ **Anderson-Gold, Sharon.** *Kant, Radical Evil and Crimes against Humanity // Kant's Anatomy of Evil.* Ed. by Sharon Anderson-Gold and Pablo Muchnik. Cambridge University Press, 2010. – Pp. 196.

¹⁷ **Guyer, Paul.** *Kant and the Experience of Freedom.* Cambridge University Press, 1996. – Pp. 19.

self-conceit can be linked with that characterising moral egoism. Kant describes it in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798):

“Moral egoist limits all ends to himself, and as a eudaemonist puts the supreme determining ground of his will simply in utility and his own happiness, not in the thought of duty. [...] The opposite of egoism can only be pluralism, that is, the way of thinking in which one is not concerned with oneself as the whole world, but rather regards and conducts oneself as a mere citizen of the world.”¹⁸

It is precisely this being “concerned with oneself as the whole world” that self-love does not presuppose, for it would not be rational for a being which among his interests has the one of being “a mere citizen of the world” simply because his rational nature requires it. Self-conceit fails to recognize what this rational nature requires and therefore limits all one’s ends to oneself.

In *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793) Kant seems to unite and slightly modify his considerations of self-love and self-conceit from the form they take in *Groundwork* and the second *Critique*. He claims that self-love can be divided into love of good will (*Wohlwollen*) and love of good pleasure (*Wohlgefallen*). First is a natural wish for well-being; it is also rational insofar as it aims at the greatest possible well-being, namely happiness. By doing so it rationally forms the idea of happiness for oneself, selects the best means to achieve it and harmonizes them. When one acts to promote his happiness, he acts rationally but the maxim he adopts is a maxim of self-love and it “has absolutely no relation to morality”¹⁹. Meaning – it is not morally relevant (not immoral). It becomes morally relevant in the negative sense when one lets this maxim of self-love to

¹⁸ **Kant, Immanuel.** *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View // Anthropology, History and Education.* Translated by **Robert B. Louden.** Cambridge University Press, 2007. – Pp. 241 - 242. (*Anth* 7: 130)

¹⁹ **Kant, Immanuel.** *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason // Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings.* Edited and translated by **Allen Wood** and **George di Giovanni,** introduction by **Robert Merrihew Adams.** Cambridge University Press, 1998. – Pp. 66. (*RGV*6: 45)

become an unconditional will determining principle, for than it becomes a “source of an incalculably great resistance to morals”²⁰. Satisfaction with oneself, with being successful in promoting one’s happiness is an aspect of love of good pleasure and it is the same as love of good will towards oneself. The pleasure in this case is conditioned by how effective the maxims were chosen, actions performed etc. There is also a second aspect of love of good pleasure – the unconditional good pleasure in oneself which is “the inner principle of a contentment only possible for us on condition that our maxims are subordinated to the moral law”²¹. Kant calls it rational or moral self – love, which, since it presupposes the consciousness of ones will being unconditionally determined by the moral law, is the same as respect.

Self-love as rational or moral self-love, which Kant introduces here, shows that the phenomenon of self-love is related more to rationality (guided by the rules of prudence or laws of morality) than mere egoism (based on ambitions of the pathological self) which sooner or later conflicts not only with morality but also with prudence and therefore – with rationality as capacity to determine and harmonize the ends we set.

b. Nature of self-love

Till now I argued that self-love aims at the greatest possible well-being of a being who is “endowed with reason and freedom”²² and who is also a sensible being, namely an embodied rational being. If self-love as self-conceit would only satisfy the sensible self, it would ignore the self that cares about morality (and since we all are capable of morality we all do care about it) and the subject would experience “a bitter sense of dislike about himself”²³ which would violate the rationality in aiming at the greatest well-being.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, p. 67. (*RGV* 6: 47)

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 66. (*RGV* 6: 46)

Obviously avoiding a bitter sense of dislike about oneself is not a moral motive to act morally. But self-love is not supposed to fulfil the functions of morality offering a motive for moral action; it should merely not oppose it. This also means that self-love does not offer the non-moral motive to act morally in order to avoid dissatisfaction with oneself; it rather leaves the space for proper moral motivation. One can imagine a person acting morally to avoid the bitter sense of dislike and still experience it if reflecting on her motive.

To understand this bitter sense and its insistence, it can be linked with Kant's account of conscience and understood as its epiphenomenon.

“Although the *pain* a man feels from the pangs of conscience has a moral source, it is still a natural effect, like grief, fear, or any other state of suffering.”²⁴

It is plausible to suppose that “any other state of suffering” refers also to the bitter sense of dislike. Kant claims that “every man, as a moral being, *has* a conscience within him originally”²⁵. He stresses that “an *erring* conscience is an absurdity” and “when it comes, or has come, to a deed, conscience speaks involuntarily and unavoidably”²⁶. Given Kant's account of conscience and claim that bitter sense is one of the natural effects of conscience, I assume that it would be impossible in most of the cases to act morally in order to avoid this bitter sense of dislike (as a motive one is conscious about) and actually successfully avoid it, for this would mean not simply not to listen to the conscience but to trick it.

The only way to actually avoid this sense is to try to act on the right motives. And self-love allows that. Kant admits that this trying itself (even if not completely successful) is something morally valuable:

“Perhaps no one has ever performed quite unselfishly (without admixture of other incentives) the duty he cognizes and also reveres;

²⁴ Kant, Immanuel. *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 197. (*MdS* 6: 394)

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 202. (*MdS* 6: 400)

²⁶ *Ibid.* (*MdS* 6: 401)

perhaps no one will ever succeed in doing so, however hard he tries. But insofar as, in examining himself most carefully, he can perceive not only no such cooperating motive but instead self-denial with respect to many motives opposing the idea of duty, he can become aware of a maxim of striving for such purity; that he is capable of, and that is also sufficient for his observance of duty.”²⁷

Self-love could oppose the strivings to act morally on moral motives if dislike of oneself for not acting morally is a smaller damage to general well-being than infringing some inclinations. Here I cannot address this complicated problem which presupposes necessity to explain why and how the demands of the moral self are prior to those of the sensible self. But if I argue that the subject of self-love is a rational embodied agent, who, as rational, is also moral (or capable of morality), than I must admit that general well-being cannot be a morally neutral category. Therefore it cannot be calculated without any reference to its relationship with morality. This means that non moral action will require some additional considerations rather than simply awareness that violation of the duty is a smaller inconvenience than a dutiful action.

How is it possible that self-love does not require only the satisfaction of the sensible self but permits the neglect of its interests if harming other kind of self constitutes a greater damage to one’s general well-being? This question can be answered by taking into consideration the nature of self-love and the way it works when aiming at happiness.

Self-love, as Kant noted previously, is rationally guided aiming at happiness. Aim at happiness “one can presuppose safely and *a priori* with every human being, because it belongs to his essence”²⁸. This essential longing for happiness is rational for two reasons. (1) One does not follow particular intensive inclinations but forms an idea of sum of inclinations,

²⁷ **Kant, Immanuel.** On the common saying: That might be correct in Theory, but it is of no use in Practice // *Practical Philosophy*. Translated by **Mary J. Gregor**. Cambridge University Press 1996. – Pp. 286. (TP 8: 284 - 285)

²⁸ **Kant, Immanuel.** *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 32. (Gr 4: 416)

satisfaction of which would mean happiness to him, namely, forms one end by uniting, or, as Herbert James Paton puts it, integrating other ends²⁹. And (2) one has to choose the best and most appropriate means to achieve this end, and harmonize them. Kant calls this rationality prudence and defines it as “the unification of all ends that are given to us by our inclinations into the single end of happiness and the harmony of the means to attaining that end”³⁰. Kant calls the practical law guiding actions that further happiness “pragmatic (rule of prudence)”³¹.

Prudential or pragmatic rationality is complex because it presupposes the ability to form from a great number of elements a concept of happiness, and then constantly to modify and adjust it to the changing circumstances, to find the best means to achieve it, harmonize these means and then, if necessary, modify in accordance with a changed concept of happiness.

The concept of happiness can only be preliminary and indefinite because “all the elements that belong to the concept of happiness are altogether empirical, i.e., have to be gotten from experience, while for the idea of happiness and absolute whole, a maximum of welfare, is required, in my present and in every future condition”.

For this reason it is impossible for a “finite being to make a determinate concept of what he really wills here”³². Lack of clear and persistent end complicates also the choice of means to achieve it.

Now, whatever concept of happiness is formed, this concept is formed by evaluating and sorting one’s inclinations. This means denying some of them and furthering others. Kant states that “the precept of happiness is for the most part so constituted that it greatly infringes on some inclinations”³³.

²⁹ See: **Paton, Herbert James.** *The Categorical Imperative. A Study in Kant’s Moral Philosophy.* Harper and Row, 1967. – Pp. 86.

³⁰ **Kant, Immanuel.** *Critique of the Pure Reason*, p. 674. (*KrV* 3: 520)

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 677. (*KrV* 3: 523)

³² **Kant, Immanuel.** *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 34. (*Gr* 4: 418)

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 15. (*Gr* 4: 399)

Avoiding inclinations that might change the general course towards happiness, or even jeopardize its achievement is the biggest challenge of prudential reason. If some inclinations would not be denied or controlled, self-love would turn into self-destruction. This happens, for example, when an inclination turns into a passion; Kant describes it in *Anthropology* as follows:

“The *ambition* of a human being may always be an inclination whose direction is approved by reason; but the ambitious person nevertheless also wants to be loved by others, he needs pleasant social intercourse with others, the maintenance of his financial position, and the like. However, if he is *passionately* ambitious person, then he is blind to these ends, thought his inclinations still summon him to them, and he overlooks completely the risk he is running that he will be hated by others, or avoided in social intercourse, or impoverished through his expenditures.”³⁴

Due to the fact that self-love can only aim at an end that is uncertain and changeable and systematically does so, it has what can be called an *opened structure*. It forms a systematic unity of means and end to be achieved but this end is never a final end and is constantly modified with all the means (and their relationship) appropriate to it, according to the changeable circumstances of human beings. Because it adjusts to these circumstances and therefore changes it is also *flexible*.

Claim that self-love has an opened structure and is flexible can be supported by Paton’s claim that there is a certain moment of spontaneity in our aiming at happiness:

“Because Kant is concerned primarily with the rational element in action, he makes no effort to consider the element of spontaneity or creativeness and indeed of arbitrariness, which is present in our search for happiness and – to a lesser extent – even in our use of means towards particular ends.”³⁵

³⁴ Kant, Immanuel. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, p. 367 - 368. (*Anth* 7: 266)

³⁵ Paton, Herbert James. *The Categorical Imperative*, p. 86.

Now when I link openness with spontaneity and arbitrariness, I refer to principle possibility to cease rationally calculable row of events that are determined and therefore calculable because there is an end. But because this end is not a clear end it does not completely determine the row of events leading to it but leaves the space for even rather radical changes.

Because self-love requires denial or control of some inclinations, it requires also the *capability to overcome oneself* as a subject of those inclinations. Self-overcoming³⁶ is required in at least two ways. (1) Through restricting or denying particular inclinations one overcomes the inner self that is the subject of those inclinations to form an idea of happiness. (2) Through the changes of outer circumstances and inner development one overcomes the previous self and – along with it – its idea of happiness to form an idea of happiness that is appropriate for the “new” self³⁷.

Because self develops and changes and it can never be known completely, self-love as a natural aiming at the greatest well-being of the self has to

³⁶ The term “self-overcoming” (*Selbstüberwindung*) Kant uses just few times. In *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* he mentions “the difficult but great triumph of self-overcoming” in connection with “an inward feeling for the beauty and dignity of human nature and a self-composure and strength of mind to relate all of one’s actions to this as a general ground” (**Kant, Immanuel**. *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime // Anthropology, History and Education*, p. 32 - 33. (GSE 2: 219)).

Although Kant’s moral theory has developed and changed since 1764, in *Groundwork* and particularly in second *Critique* and *Metaphysics of Morals* he holds that self-overcoming is crucial for moral development. He states that virtue is “the moral attitude in the *struggle*” (**Kant, Immanuel**. *Critique of the Practical Reason*, p. 109. (KpV 5: 84)). And that man must think he is “capable of resisting and conquering by reason” (**Kant, Immanuel**. *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p.186. (MdS 6: 380)) his inclinations that oppose to the commands of reason in order to be moral.

In *Religion* he also mentions self-overcoming as an important feature of moral development, stressing that one has to examine his previous moral disposition (the disposition one overcomes) for one’s whole life is a moral category (see: **Kant, Immanuel**. *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, p. 92. (RGV 6: 76 -77)).

³⁷ I do not take the new subject here to be another subject; it is the same subject in another stage of his development, subject with changed and new priorities, interests, needs, etc.

count on its relativity (in the sense of incompleteness and changeability) in any given state. And only because the self to be satisfied is relative, it is possible to overcome it. The constant self-overcoming is crucial if self-love is to be united with morality in the phenomenal level, because for a sensible being to become conscious of his non-sensible self, the principal possibility to see this sensible self as relative, is necessary.

c. Self-love and morality

Self-love can coexist with morality because it does not presuppose an unconditioned worth of the sensible self, and therefore allows it to be subordinated to a moral self, and further the interests of a subject I have previously described as rational embodied subject. This subordination in the phenomenal level happens by means of self-overcoming that essentially characterizes self-love. Just as in order to achieve happiness we overcome ourselves as subjects of particular inclinations and subjects aiming at changed idea of happiness, we, if this happiness presupposes being moral, overcome ourselves as non moral subjects, or at least – we try to. And this happens without experiencing this trying to be moral or being moral as something opposed to our “real” interests, namely, it does not happen artificially.

The fact of subordination does not mean that the sensible nature of the subject cannot be satisfied, it only means that it can be satisfied as far as it does not conflict with this subject being moral. This is the condition of its worth. If satisfaction of the sensible nature of the subject is conditioned by its accordance with morality, it has a moral worth. Kant claims that

“to secure one’s own happiness is a duty (at least indirectly), for the lack of contentment with one’s condition, in a crowd of many sorrows and amid unsatisfied needs, can easily become a great temptation to the violation of duties.”³⁸

³⁸ Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 14 - 15. (Gr 4: 399)

Self-love in accordance with morality does not only have a negative function, namely that of preventing the frustration of the sensible self to put in danger the moral self. But, by recognizing the authority of the moral self, it allows and even helps to cultivate feelings which, to Kant's mind, should further and accompany moral deeds.

In *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant states that it is our duty to cultivate beneficence, gratitude and sympathetic participation (duties of love). Sympathetic participation requires cultivation of the natural capacity to experience joy and sorrow of others (the natural feeling of compassion) and to use it for moral purposes.³⁹ If we would be captured in self-conceit most likely we would experience the joy of others through envying them and their sorrow through *Schadenfreude*. But as self-love does not presuppose a total concentration on the sensible self, which makes furthering his interest the main reference point of everything concerning him, it allows, by analogy with what harms or pleases oneself, to experience the state of others adequately.

If one is emotionally involved with other person, one can not only experience her joy as hers but as one's own. An example here could be friendship, which Kant calls "an ideal of each participating and sharing sympathetically in the other's well-being"⁴⁰. What makes friendship possible is one's ability to gain satisfaction without furthering one's direct interests and only experiencing the joy of the other as one's own joy (even if not with the same intensity).

The ability to experience somebody else's joy or satisfaction is not necessarily conditioned by the relationship with this somebody. One can also be a friend of man in general or a philanthropist – "someone who finds satisfaction in the well-being (*salus*) of men considered simply as men, for whom it is *well* when things go well for every other"⁴¹. Philanthropy Kant describes as practical love of man that is grounding all the duties of love to others. And this phenomenon, as the one of friendship, is also possible only because self-love does not limit all one's ends to oneself.

³⁹ See: **Kant, Immanuel**. *The Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 250 - 251. (*MdS* 6: 457)

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 261. (*MdS* 6: 469)

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 245. (*MdS* 6: 450)

Along with philanthropy Kant introduces three other kinds of attitude one can take towards others: misanthropy which applies to somebody “for whom it is well only when things go badly for others”, selfishness – to someone “who is indifferent to how things go for others if only they go well for himself”, sensible misanthropy – to someone “who avoids other men because he can find no delight in them, thought he indeed *wishes* all of them *well*”⁴². Selfishness can clearly be linked with self-conceit where it is all about how things go for oneself.

So, sympathetic participation and duties of love towards others in general presuppose one’s ability to experience other’s joy or sorrow adequately, and to satisfy one’s self-love through joy of another person. And if duties to others are fulfilled by using this ability they are fulfilled, as Allen Wood puts it, “with intelligence and sensitivity”⁴³.

Does the fact that one can feel well because somebody else is well mean that self-love is not centred in the self? Or does it mean that it is still all about the “dear self” being satisfied in a more complex way than it happens in self-conceit? A scenario like this Kant offers in *Groundwork* as an argument against ascribing moral worth to a dutiful action motivated by sympathetic feelings:

“To be beneficent where one can is a duty, and besides this there are some souls so sympathetically attuned that, even without any other motive of vanity or utility to self, take an inner gratification in spreading joy around them, and can take delight in the contentment of others insofar as it is their own work. But I assert that in such a case the action, however it might conform to duty and however aimable it is, nevertheless has no true moral worth, but is on the same footing as other inclinations, e.g., the inclination to honour, which, when it fortunately encounters something that in fact serves the common good and is in conformity with duty, and is thus worthy of honour, deserves praise and encouragement, but not esteem (..)”⁴⁴

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ **Wood, Allen W.** *Kantian Ethics*. Cambridge University Press, 2008. – Pp. 177.

⁴⁴ **Kant, Immanuel.** *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 14. (*Gr 4*: 398)

Clearly this could be a case where one is satisfied by well-being of another person without directly gaining anything from this well-being and still this person, this *Menschenfreund*, is selfish. But this is just one of the cases when self-love can be satisfied through the well-being of others. One can imagine a case where the well-being of the other person is not one's "own work". Or a case where other's well-being is one's merit but done secretly and therefore one is not honoured for it.

My point is not that self-love is not centred in the self. As far as it satisfies self and furthers its interests it is self-centred even if it allows caring for others and being pleased through it. My point is that this satisfaction is not so strictly and directly tied to particular selfish interests (like being honoured) but it leaves a wide space for genuine well-wishing feelings for others.

Paton describes this kind of being self-centred as follows:

"The pursuit of happiness, if it were concerned only with the attainment of pleasure, might well be described as selfish; but if it is concerned with the fulfilment of our desires, it should be described as self-centred rather than as selfish, since, as Kant always recognises, we have other-regarding as well as self-regarding desires. The centre on this level is always the self, but the circumference, so to speak, may cover many things, including the happiness of others."⁴⁵

So self-love can successfully coexist with morality and even prevent its endangerment by frustrated sensible self. It can also be helpful in furthering one's morality as far as being moral presupposes cultivation of moral feelings. Because self-love does not reduce all one's engagements to one's gains or losses, it allows to understand and to experience joy or sorrow of others. And because self-love does not restrict all one's possible satisfaction to one's own benefit, it can also be satisfied by other's well-being. This kind of satisfaction can be very different depending on a number of conditions (what relationship one has with this other, how relevant to

⁴⁵ Paton, Herbert James. *The Categorical Imperative*, p. 86.

one's own situation is the other's benefit etc.) but the important thing is that it is possible at all, and if it is, then this ability can be cultivated and controlled.

Conclusion

The tension between morality and inclinations in the moral life (mentioned above as premise 2.2) can be reduced to morality as incompatible with self-conceit. Self-love is not only compatible with morality, but can even be seen as enabling and furthering morality in the phenomenal level.

Morality requires respect for the moral law to be the determining ground of the will. Self-conceit is not compatible with morality because it ascribes an absolute and unconditioned worth to the sensible self. Therefore, in the case of self-conceit, will is determined by the inclinations and guided by principle to seek the greatest possible satisfaction of this self. Position one takes in self-conceit is not only incompatible with morality but also with prudential rationality, for the subject whose interests it should be furthering, is not only a sensible being but also rational and moral, namely an embodied rational being.

Self-love is not restricted to the sensible self and therefore is concerned with the general well-being of human being due to its nature described through its particular opened structure, flexibility and self-overcoming. Given its nature, self-love can be successfully united with morality when the moral self reveals as prior to the sensible self. As united with morality self-love can and does prevent its endangerment by a frustrated sensible self. And, because the moral feelings which, according to Kant, should accompany and further moral deeds, rest on natural capability of self-love to be satisfied (to some extent) without one directly benefiting, self-love also contributes to development of morality in the phenomenal level.

To understand how moral obligations are perceived and executed by human beings, inclinations and their complex nature has to be taken in account. For knowledge of this complex nature of the inclinations can reveal much of how morality works for embodied beings like us.

Elvīra Šimfa

Būt morālam un mīlēt sevi. Moralitāte, patmīlība un iedomība Kanta morāles teorijā

Kopsavilkums

Kants uzskata, ka morāle un tās pavēles attiecas uz visām *racionālām būtnēm*, uz cilvēku tās attiecas tiktāl, ciktāl viņš ir racionāls, tātad – neņemot vērā viņa īpašo iedabu un tieksmes, kas šo iedabu raksturo. Vēl vairāk – minētais Kanta uzskats pamatojas pieņēmumā, ka tieksmju līdzdalība cilvēka morālajā dzīvē izpaužas kā to pretdarbība morāles pavēlēm, tādēļ tieksmes jāsavalda un jāierobežo.

Tomēr šī aina, kas atspoguļo ļoti zināmus un daudzkārt analizētus Kanta uzskatus, nav pilnīga. Proti, tajā nav ņemti vērā Kanta uzskati par cilvēka iedabu un tieksmju sarežģīto, no morāles viedokļa, neviennozīmīgi vērtējamo raksturu. Tieši šie, līdz šim mazāk zināmie un analizētie uzskati jāņem vērā, ja vēlamies labāk saprast Kanta domas par to, kā *cilvēki* var būt morāli.

Tieksmju kopumu Kants saprot kā savtību, kas nav viendabīgs fenomēns. Savtību raksturo gan patmīlība, gan iedomība. Iedomība paredz to, ka absolūta vērtība tiek piedēvēta jutekliskajam Es, tātad – princips, kas nosaka gribu iedomības gadījumā, ir tieksmju apmierinājuma princips. Tas nozīmē, ka iedomība nav savienojama ar moralitāti, kas pieprasa, lai vienīgais gribu nosakošais princips būtu tikumiskais likums.

Patmīlība, kas ir dabiska, visiem cilvēkiem piemītoša tiekšanās (tieksmju apvienojums) pēc laimes, ir savienojama ar moralitāti, jo tā nepiedēvē jutekliskajam Es absolūtu vērtību. Tā kā patmīlība ir piedēvējama cilvēkam, kas ir gan jutekliska, gan saprātīga (tātad spējīga būt morāla) būtne, vērtības, ko cilvēks piedēvē jutekliskajam Es, nosacījums ir tā saskaņa ar morālo Es, jo morālā Es interešu realizācija arī ir iekļauta šādi raksturota cilvēka priekšstatā par laimi jeb lielāko iespējamo labklājību. Iedomība nevar realizēt tā subjekta intereses, kas reizē ir saprātīgs un morāls subjekts, tādējādi iedomību var uzskatīt par kļūdu patmīlības racionalitātē.

Racionalitāte, kas regulē patmīlības tiekšanos uz laimi, ir pragmatiska racionalitāte jeb gudrība. Tā ir kompleksa racionalitāte, kas paredz sarežģītus rīcības regulācijas modeļus. Šīs racionalitātes raksturu lielā mērā nosaka tās mērķa nenoteiktība. Proti, ņemot vērā, ka laimes idejā ir ietvertas pieredzē balstītas zināšanas par subjekta lielāko iespējamo labklājību visos viņa dzīves posmos, tā nekad nevar būt skaidra un pastāvīga ideja, jo šāda informācija visā pilnībā cilvēkam nevar būt pieejama. Tādējādi patmīlības tieksme pēc laimes ietver racionālus un sarežģītus mehānismus: tās ietvaros tiek veidota noteikta ideja par laimi kā mērķi, noteikti līdzekļi šī mērķa sasniegšanai, šie līdzekļi tiek savā starpā saskaņoti; kad priekšstati par to, kas jāietver laimes idejā, ir mainījušies (un tas notiek, attīstoties un mainoties cilvēka iekšējam un ārējam stāvoklim), visa šī mērķa un līdzekļu shēma atkal ir jāmaina.

Šajā patmīlības tiecībā uz laimi nepieciešams vairākkārt sevi pārvarēt: ir jāpārvar sevi kā noteiktu spēcīgu tieksmju subjektu, ja šo tieksmju apmierināšana apdraud vispārīgo tiecību uz laimi, un jāpārvar sevi savā iepriekšējā attīstības posmā, proti, jāpārvar savs iepriekšējais Es.

Ņemot vērā šo patmīlības tiecību uz laimi, varam raksturot *patmīlības struktūru kā atvērtu* (jo tai ir neskaidrs un mainīgs mērķis), tātad varam arī pieņemt, ka *patmīlība ir elastīga un paredz pastāvīgu sevis pārvarēšanu*. Ja šajā mērķī tiek iekļauta arī subjekta morālo interešu realizācija, tad patmīlība, tās iedabas dēļ, veiksmīgi līdzdarbojas un balsta subjekta morālo attīstību. Īpaši svarīgi subjekta morālajai attīstībai ir spēja pārvarēt sevi (šī tēze atbilst Kanta uzskatam par to, ka tikumība ir morālais domāšanas veids cīņā). Tā kā subjekta dabiskajai patmīlībai šī spēja ir raksturīga, tā darbojas arī morāles labā.

Patmīlība ne tikai pieļauj cilvēka morālo attīstību un sagatavo cilvēku šai attīstībai ar sevis pārvarēšanas spēju un prasību, kas ir svarīga arī laimes (pat ja tajā nebūtu iekļauta morālo interešu realizācija) sasniegšanai, bet tā pieļauj arī morālo jūtu iespējamību. Kants uzskata, ka cilvēkiem ir jāattīsta un jāstiprina morālās jūtas, kuras veicina un sniedz kvalitatīvu pienesumu pienākuma pildīšanai. Morālās jūtas, īpaši – labvēlīga līdzdalība, kas ir svarīga, lai pildītu mīlestības pienākumus pret citiem, paredz spēju adekvāti izprast un pieredzēt citu cilvēku prieku un sāpes, kā arī spēju citu prieku un apmierinājumu izjust kā savu apmierinājumu, bez kāda noteikta ieguvuma sev.

Šī spēja ir sakņota patmīlībā, kas, atšķirībā no iedomības, neparedz sevi skatīt kā visu savu attiecību centrālo punktu un to ietvaros visu izvērtēt savu ieguvumu un zaudējumu kategorijās.

Spriedzi cilvēka morālajā dzīvē, saskaņā ar Kanta uzskatiem, drīzāk veido moralitāte un iedomība. Moralitātes attiecības ar patmīlību ir krietni sarežģītākas un, kā argumentējam šajā rakstā, lielā mērā tās ir pozitīvas. Ņemot vērā un analizējot šīs attiecības, mēs daudz varam uzzināt par to, kā morāli, saskaņā ar Kanta uzskatiem, var īstenot un īsteno cilvēks – ne tikai kā racionāla būtne.