

## KANT'S CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE AS VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE POST-MODERN VALUE SYSTEM IN AN ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

By

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### Abstract

*Values which are ethical principles that mould the personality of a man is being jeopardize. Values are personal which are developed through conscious habits. The conception of eroded values system is the order of the day. That is why Kant's categorical imperative is employed as to solve the degradation of the values by imbibing the principle of good will, duty and means in our lives. Employing the critical analytic method of philosophy, the paper argues that our human values need to be instilled in us right from childhood. A child who is nurtured in the ethical values hardly leaves it as it is an offshoot of his family cultural identity. This paper concludes that there is a need to go back to our roots and imbibe the human values embedded in our culture before the era of globalization.*

**Keywords:** *Values, Morals, Imperatives, Globalization, Culture.*

### Introduction

Man lives in a society that is guided by rules and norms which are imbedded in the value systems because values are rules. We are in the era of globalization. Globalization which is the current development trend exists in the whole world. Globalization according to Wilfred (1997) is:

*Only the latest phase and expression of this uninterrupted history of domination and subjection of peoples, nations and cultures through the conquistadors and colonizers. It is a tradition of political, economic and cultural domination of some nations over others.*

Globalization has really affected the lives of people positively and negatively. But the disadvantages outweigh the advantages due to eroded value system. Globalization has thwarted the value systems in our cultures. It has much adverse effect on the cultural identity of people that refuse to see the difference of their cultural values and that globalized values. Oguegu (2014:72) made it clear that:

*Globalization over the three years gained control over systematic power thereby aiding the corrosion of inherited, gained irrespective of the fact that it revitalizes or more precisely encourages the revitalization of particular identities. Globalization is a challenge and threat to tradition. The experience of living in the global has made the lives of people in the world today destabilized and disoriented.*

A man in the community defines himself by his character is molded by the values a person is brought up in and believes in. A value molds a person because value is the essence of

personality. A man's value makes him to stand out among others because that is what he is known for. This means that values defines a man's character whether good or bad.

Values which are imbedded in the culture of the people are now being jeopardized through globalization. The question now arises, what is the effect of globalization in our value system? In order to know how to behave and run away from negative effects of globalization in our lives and culture, Immanuel Kant came out with his categorical imperative that is the basis of his moral philosophy which says "Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law".

### **Meaning of Values**

Ethical values are set established principles governing virtuous behaviour in order to help people so that the community or society maintains a good reputation or good character. Values are embedded in ethics which is a branch of philosophy that teaches us how or ought to behave. Ethics refers to well founded standard of right and wrong that prescribes what humans ought to do especially in times of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness or specific virtues. Ethics also refers to those standards that impose the reasonable obligations to refrain from rape, stealing, murder, assault, slander and fraud.

Moreover, values can be defined as those things that are important, that guides an individual which are hold by high esteem. Values are moral, ethical and professional attributes of character. Values are principles people use in determining their behaviours as to know if it is right or wrong. Besides, some people behave wrongly and believe it to be right due to their personal inclinations and ideologies. Onebunne (2015: 42) defines values as:

*Broad preferences concerning appropriate courses of action or outcomes. As such, values reflects a person's sense of right and wrong or what "ought" to be. Values tend to influence attitudes and behaviour. A personal value is an individual's absolute or relative and ethical value, the assumption of which can be the basis for ethical (wrong or right) action.*

Human values are the principles, standards, convictions and beliefs that people adapt as their guidelines in daily life. In [www.businessdictionary.com](http://www.businessdictionary.com), value is seen as a major influence on a person's behaviour and attitude and serves as broad guideline in all situations. However, moral values as well refer to a set of principles that guide an individual on how to evaluate right or wrong. People imbibe moral values as to justify their actions, decisions and intentions which also defines the personal values based on personal conviction irrespective of societal influences. Values can be personal, cultural or Christian.

### **Relationship between Culture and Values**

There is a popular definition that culture is the people's way of life. Culture is all encompassing regarding human existence. The culture of the people is their identity which is known as cultural identity. Blooms, (1977: 66) argues that culture is the network of human interaction undisturbed by climate, time and country. Ogugua (2004:62) is of the opinion that culture refer to those elements which help in refining, cultivating, reshaping, designing and developing man towards mental and physical environment.

Values are principles that guides the people's way of life. It is a standard that guides people in the society. Our culture influences our value system which is turn makes the community to be stable. Values are part of the culture of the society. Values are what the society believes in as to be rules, norms or even guiding principles. Values provide the basis for judgment of actions as right or wrong in what the society holds in esteem. This means that values are embodiments of what a community stands for, believes in and as well should be the basis of the inhabitants of the community.

From the above analysis, we infer that value dictates for the people in society what to do, what they believe in, what they understand and what they think that is morally right or wrong to do.

### **Immanuel Kant's Moral Philosophy**

Kant in his "Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals" establishes his ethical theory. Kant sets out to seek out and justify the supreme principle of morality. The basis of Kant's moral philosophy is rooted in the question, "what I ought to do". To answer this question, Kant finds a categorization of our basic moral duties to ourselves and others. In addition, Kant is of the view that moral philosophy should characterize and explain the demands that morality makes in human psychology and forms of human social interactions. Kant is of the opinion, that goodwill must be practiced by everybody because good is good in itself. Kant (1981:7) opines thus:

*Nothing can possibly be conceived in the world even out of it which can be called good without qualification except goodwill. All other things in the world including intelligence, courage, judgement, resolution etc are good. This may become bad if the will which is to make use of them is not good.*

Goodwill is subjected to any condition. Kant went further to say that nothing can be achieved except goodwill. An action did out of goodwill have no other motive but the performance of duty. A man who acts as a rational being cannot be guided by any motive except duty. An action done for the sake of duty does not derive its moral value either from the fact that it seek to produce certain results. But from a formular maxim, a maxim independent of the desired ends of which action seeks to produce certain results. Also, goodwill is manifested in acting for the sake of duty. Acting for the sake of duty is acting out of reverence to the law. A good will is good without limitations. On the other hand, by action done from duty or for the sake of duty. By this, Kant means an action performed from no other motive but the moral one, such an action is done solely because it is what duty required. Kant enunciates thus:

*In action from duty derives its moral worth not from the purpose which is to be attained by it but from the maxim by which is determined and therefore does not depend on the realization of the object of the action but hereby on the principle of volition by which the action has taken place, without regard to any object of desire.*

The moral law is unconditional. It is categorical since it holds absolutely and without qualification. It is imperative since it is a command that ought to be obeyed. The categorical imperative is rational, since it is approached intuitively by the reason and is logically consistence; it is a priori, since it can be known in advance to apply to every possible problem that may arise in experience. However, Kant gave the formulation of categorical imperative in the form of the idea of will of every rational being as a universally legislative will. The most basic aim of Kant's moral philosophy is to seek out and establish the supreme principle of morality.

With these basic principles of morality embedded in the categorical imperative, man is able to overcome his erode value system. This is because, before an individual acts, he thinks and says "what ought I to do? By this moral principle, our actions are guided and monitored as to fall in line with Kant's proposition and the general moral principle of do good and avoid evil. The most important aim of moral philosophy for Kant is to show that we as rational agents are abound by moral requirements to comply with rules. The categorical imperatives come up with a precise statement to the principle of principles on which all other ordinary moral judgements rely upon.

## **Disordered Value System.**

Degradation of human value in our society is very disturbing because it causes havoc among the inhabitants. Values are what we hold in high esteem that affects our decisions. The decisions we make in our lives indicate what value we uphold. The basis of human value is hinged on respect, integrity and honesty. However, the world has changed today due to globalization; globalization which can be seen in new discoveries and inventions of different technologies that helps man to socialize with other cultures of the world.

Nowadays, greatness, goodness and success are measured by the wealth one has. The main aim of life is to earn more by any means. This trend makes man means to an end and not ends to means as Kant postulates. Human beings achieve luxury by greediness, kidnapping, stealing, murder; fraud etc. Selfishness, dishonesty, distrust and betrayal are modern and foul means to make money these days because honesty is no longer the best policy.

Moreover, corruption is the order of the day and way of life with people exclaiming “everybody is doing it”. Terrorism, violence and drug abuse has become the common household name in our society. The countries of the world are faced with degradation, eroded and battered human, ethical and moral values.

In a degraded valued community, people are no longer themselves. People are more self-centered and their moral base becomes what makes them happy as can be seen in the egalitarian and utilitarian principle.

## **Conclusion**

Moral principles are established as to determine the core values that guide a society. A culture based on oral excellence requires a commitment among the members of the society, as to develop qualities that are imbedded and hinged on virtues like integrity and honesty. The basic foundation of a person’s character is developed during the early years of childhood. This stage in life is shaped by the values and beliefs of parents. Therefore, parents and educators should have in mind that they are role models who should try and notice bad traits in children and correct them because they are highly influenced by peer pressure. When the core values of a society are handed down in the early stage of life, no matter the role of globalization in their lives, they should be able to be stand firm in their cultural beliefs and customs.

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