

MODULE 2 – FREEDOM AND MORALITY

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

At the end of this module, the students will be able to:

1. explain Kant's definition of freedom and morality;
2. analyze the relationship of culture to morality; and
3. define cultural relativism.

MODULE OUTLINE:

Freedom and Moral Acts
Culture and Morality
Dynamics of Culture
The Filipino Way

FREEDOM AND MORAL ACTS

Introduction

In Kant philosophy, freedom is defined as a concept which is involved in the moral domain, at the question: what should I do?

In summary, Kant says that the moral law is only that I know myself as a free person. Kantian freedom is closely linked to the notion of autonomy, which means law itself: thus, freedom falls obedience to a law that I created myself. It is therefore, respect its commitment to compliance with oneself.

Practical reason legislates (makes laws and requirements) of free beings or more precisely the causality of free beings. Thus, practical reason is based on freedom, it is freedom.

Phenomena, in the Kantian thought, are subject to the law of natural causality: each event: each event is the effect of another, and so on to infinity. Unlike the phenomenon of man, the moral rule is free, it has the power to self-start condition. Kant ethics is mainly based on the concept of free will and autonomy.

Kant's Morality and Freedom

To act freely is to act autonomously. To act autonomously is to act according to a law *I give myself*. Whenever I act according to the laws of nature, demands of social convention, when I pursue pleasure and comfort, I am not acting freely. To act freely is not to simply choose a means to a given end. To act freely is to choose the end itself, for its own sake.

This is central to Kant's notion of freedom. For Kant, acting freely (autonomously) and acting morally are one and the same thing.

The capacity to act autonomously in this manner gives humans that special dignity that things and animals do not have. Respecting this dignity requires us to treat others not as a means to an end, but as ends in themselves.

To arrive at a proper understanding of Kant's notion of moral law and the connection between morality, freedom and reason, let's examine these contrasts:

1. **Duty vs. Inclination (morality)** – Only the motive of the duty, acting according to the law I give myself confers moral worth to an action. Any other motive, while possibly commendable, cannot give an action moral worth.
2. **Autonomy vs. Heteronomy (freedom)** – I am only free when my will is determined autonomously, governed by the law *I give myself*. Being part of nature, I am not exempt from its laws and I'm inclined or compelled to act according to those laws (act heteronomously). My capacity for reason opens another possibility, that of acting according to laws other than the laws of nature: the laws I give myself. This reason, "pure practical reason," legislates a priori – regardless of all the empirical ends.
3. **Categorical vs. Hypothetical Imperatives (reason)** – Kant acknowledges two ways in which reason can command the will, two imperatives. Hypothetical Imperative uses instrumental reason: If I want X, I must do Y (If I want to stay out of jail, I must be a good citizen and not rob banks). Hypothetical imperative is always conditional.

If the action would be good solely as a means to something else, the imperative is hypothetical. If the action is represented as good in itself, and therefore necessary for a will which of itself accords with reason, the imperative is categorical.

Categorical Imperative is non-conditional. "It is concerned not with the matter of the action and its presumed results, but with its form, and with the principle from which it follows. And what is essentially good in the action consists in the mental disposition, let the consequences be what they may.

What is Categorical Imperative?

This question can be answered from the idea of a law that binds us as rational beings regardless of any particular ends.

Two main formulations of the Categorical Imperative:

1. Act only on that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law. "Maxim is a rule, a principle that gives reason to action. This is a "universalizing test" that checks whether my action puts my interests and circumstances ahead of everyone else's. My action will fail the test if it results in a contradiction.

Example: I want a loan, but I know I won't have money to repay it. I'm considering making a promise I know I can't keep. Can I make this a universal law, that law that says "every time one needs a loan and has no money to repay it, one should

make a false promise? Imagine everyone then acting according to this maxim. We quickly realize that this would result in negating the whole institution of promise-keeping. We arrive at a contradiction.

2. “Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in you, own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.”

For Kant, human existence has in itself an absolute value – it is an end in itself and the only ground of a possible categorical imperative.

The Role of Freedom in Morality

The personal aspect of morality – which might more properly be called ethics – is about the cultivation of virtue: the development of character traits so that choosing the good becomes a matter of habit. But a person, in order to be truly virtuous, must be free to cultivate the virtues, or not.

There is no virtue in being temperate when you are being forced not to indulge. There is no virtue in being charitable when someone is forcing you to give up what is yours. Virtue can be guided by cultural traditions and social institutions, but it cannot be coerced. A virtuous man must also be a free man.

The interpersonal aspect of morality is more about rule following. These rules are important because, they prevent us from “colliding” with each other. They permit us to live together in harmony, and they also make us recognize, apart from the mere consequences to ourselves, the rights of others. Here too, liberty is essential.

When some people are permitted to dominate others, they treat others as merely a means to an end, rather than ends in themselves. Not only does this fail to honor the basic dignity within each person, it also stifles the flourishing of human potential and creativity. A society of domination will be a society that never reaches its full potential in the human sciences, physical sciences, and creative arts. Liberty affords us the greatest space possible to pursue our projects, in a way that enables us to live well with one another.

Having a final end does not obviate the need for liberty. Freedom remains essential. Freedom is so precious that God will not override it, even when we badly misuse that freedom. In other words, we can’t get where we’re going if we’re not free to walk the road. Thus, freedom is essential to a genuinely good human life at all the levels of morality.

Freedom: The Foundation of Moral Act

Freedom is humans’ greatest quality and it is a reflection of our creator. Freedom is the power rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that and so to perform deliberate actions on one’s own responsibility. Having freedom means having responsibility. Every action you choose further determines our character.

Are animals free? Do they have freedom? What separates human from animals? Reason (Intellect) and will (moral action). Good and evil are forged in freedom. To the degree that a

person reaches higher level of freedom, he becomes capable of higher levels of morality. The sinful person becomes a slave.

The existence of freedom is a central premise in Catholic morality. Our secular culture greatly exalts freedom. Yet it also questions whether freedom really exists.

Freedom and Free Will

While the existence of freedom is a central premise in Catholic morality, we are not all equally free. There are many possible limits to our freedom: both external and internal. External freedom is a freedom from factors outside ourselves that limit or destroy our free will. Internal freedom is a freedom from interior factors that limit our free will.

Requirement of True Freedom

True freedom is dependent upon truth, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). True freedom is oriented toward the good. We should not understand freedom as the possibility of doing evil. Evil enslaves us and diminishes our ability to be free. True freedom requires responsibility. There is no such thing as irresponsible freedom.

Human Acts vs Acts of Human

Human acts make use of his knowledge and free will. Examples: love your enemy, pray to God, sacrifice for others. Acts of human do not make use of his intellect or will. His action is natural. Examples: breathing, blinking, and sneezing.

True freedom liberates us to develop our God-given talents in a responsible way so we can live our lives for others and for God. True freedom serves what is good, just and true.

CULTURE AND MORALITY

What is Culture?

Culture is derived from the Latin word “*cultura*” or “*cultus*” which means care or cultivation. Culture as cultivation implies that every human being is a potential member of his own social group. He is endowed with certain innate qualities to make use. However, he cannot develop these inborn talents without the other people. He/she needs other people who can provide him/her with the needed opportunities so he/she can translate these potentialities into realities called achievements. These accomplishments not only help him achieve self-actualization but also make him/her a contributing member of his society.

Anthropologist Edward B. Tylor, an Englishman, developed one of the classic definitions of culture. He said, “Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, law, art, moral, custom, and other capabilities and habits acquired as a member of society.” In other words, culture refers to the totality of the humanly created world, from material culture and cultivated landscapes, via social institutions (political, religious, economic, etc.), to knowledge and meaning, something that human has created and learned in a society. His theory defines culture in descriptive terms as the “complex whole” that makes up social ideas and institutions.

In Tylor's view, culture includes all aspects of human activity, from the fine arts to popular entertainment, from everyday behavior to the development of sophisticated technology. It contains the plan, rules, techniques, designs and policies for living.

On the other hand, sociologists defined culture as the entire way of life followed by people, and everything learned and shared by people in society. According to Landis, culture is a complex set of learned and shared beliefs, customs, skills, habits, traditions, and knowledge common to members of society.

The Influence of Culture in Moral Development

1. Culture is always social and communal by which the relationship of the people towards one another and their experience as a people are the culture's meadow. It is in this relationship and communal experience that culture influences the moral development of its members. It is important to note that morality as principle is promoted because primarily of the relationship within the community.
2. The culture defines the normative principles and behaviors of the society. It defines which particular principle and behavior that should be kept that would serve the best interest of the community and also that should not be promoted or rejected. This kind of influence of culture in moral development is best seen in terms of relational level. Again, it is basic that it is in the relationship within the community and in their experience of that relationship that the community would be able to form certain normative principles and behaviors. These defined normative principles and behaviors inform and indoctrinate the members as they live and relate with the community. These would shape also the kind of moral judgment as person has, which is most of the time congruent to the general moral judgment.
3. Moreover, a culture, as best exemplified in the experience of the people, develops restrictions and sets boundaries and limitations as they live and relate with one another. These restrictions and boundaries serve as protection among themselves. These would create an atmosphere of promoting the welfare of the community. Indeed, anyone who tries to step beyond these is subject to punishment or consequences set by the community embedded in the culture. Culture here draws this consciousness into the moral development of its members.
4. As culture helps in generating the character and identity of its people, it also includes their moral character. Culture conditions the mind – the way people think and the way they perceive the world and their relationship with one another.
5. The culture identifies the authorities or the governing individuals or groups. They are the symbol of guidance and control. Through their roles and responsibilities in the community within the given culture; people submit themselves to their authorities. By their very authority as they represent the general populace, the members look at them as

people who promote and keep the set of rules and laws that govern the community. Their moral judgments are considered essential in moral issues of the community. In particular, in domestic level the parents of a child are the first authorities who set and teach the child essential for the moral development of their child.

Evidently, culture is very significant in the development of the human person and in moral development particularly. Furthermore, as one would look at it, culture has a tight grip on the moral development of the people. Culture is the conditioning principle of the moral development of its members. Nevertheless, culture as the principle that surrounds the moral development of the people may not always promote what is good and just for all. It is certain that sometimes there are principles, attitudes and behaviors that actually hinder good relationships and violate the welfare of the others. These are indeed difficult to eliminate immediately in a culture, yet, they should be subjected to people's discernment that proper changes and modifications have to be done for the sake of the welfare and justice for everybody.

DYNAMICS OF CULTURE

Cultural Relativism

The concept of cultural relativism was established as an analytical tool by German-American anthropologist Franz Boas in the early 20th century.

Cultural relativism is the ability to understand a culture on its own terms and not make judgments using the standards of one's own culture. The goal of this is promote understanding of cultural practices that are not typically part of one's own culture. Using the perspective of cultural relativism leads to the view that no culture is superior than another culture when compared to systems of morality, law, politics, etc. It is a concept that cultural norms and values derive their meaning within a specific social context.

Cultural relativism is considered to be more constructive and positive conception as compared to ethnocentrism.

Cultural relativism is a method or procedure for explaining and interpreting other people's culture.

Cultural relativism is widely accepted in modern anthropology.

Cultural relativism is closely related to ethical relativism, which views truth as variable and not absolute.

Cultural relativism sees nothing inherently wrong with any cultural expression.

Marriage practices of Muslims should not be judged based on the culture of the Roman Catholics is one example. The celebration of fiesta in the Philippines should not be looked into by other nations as too much religiosity.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Cultural Relativism

Advantages of Cultural Relativism:

1. It is a system which promotes cooperation.
2. It creates a society where equality is possible.
3. People can pursue a genuine interest.
4. Respect is encouraged in a system of cultural relativism.
5. It preserves human cultures.
6. Cultural relativism creates a society without judgment.
7. Moral relativism can be excluded from cultural relativism.
8. We can create personal moral codes based on societal standards with ease.
9. It stops cultural conditioning.

Disadvantages of Cultural Relativism:

1. It creates a system that is fueled by personal bias.
2. It would create chaos.
3. It is an idea that is based on the perfection of humanity.
4. It could promote a lack of diversity.
5. It draws people away from one another.
6. It could limit moral progress.
7. It could limit humanity's progress.
8. Cultural relativism can turn perceptions into truth.

THE FILIPINO WAY

The Filipino Customs and Traditions

- When children or young people greet or say goodbye to their elders they typically do so by taking the right hand of the elder with their right hand and place the back of the elder's hand lightly on their forehead. It is a way of giving respect to the elders and it is believed that it is also a way of receiving blessings from the elders.

“*Mano po*” is the term used when taking the hands of elders. *Mano* is a Spanish word for “*hand*” while *po* is used at the end of the sentence when addressing elders or superiors.

- The Filipinos are one of the most hospitable people you may find anywhere. Foreign visitors in the country are treated with the utmost respect. This trait is usually seen during fiestas and holidays where many Filipinos are giving their best to entertain their visitors well. For Filipinos, to be able to serve others gives them honor of showing true friendship. Filipino hospitality is a trait you can't take away from them.
1. Having close family ties is one of the outstanding cultural values that Filipinos have. The family takes care of each other and is taught to be loyal to family and elders by simply obeying their authorities. This is one of the unique characteristics of Filipinos.
 2. The Bayanihan – It is the spirit of communal unity or effort to achieve a particular objective. A famous example of this is the neighbors carrying a hut or house to a new

location. People nowadays use it to describe an outpouring of community spirit – as people give their all to the common good, without expecting recognition or personal gain.

3. Courtship – We Filipinos are very romantic when it comes to heart affairs. Serenading or *harana* in Tagalog is one of the most popular forms of courtship to show that a man is very serious with his intentions to a woman.
4. Religion – The habit of going to church and often praying reflects that Filipinos have a deep faith and belief when it comes to religion.
5. Superstition – These beliefs have come from the different sayings and beliefs of our ancestors that aim to prevent danger from happening or to make a person refrain from doing something in particular.

Some are practiced primarily because Filipinos believe that there is nothing to lose if they comply with these beliefs.

6. Marriage and Wedding Customs – In the country, marriage is a sacred union of man and woman after a period of courtship and engagement. It is a sacrament between two people who love each other. For many Filipinos, the eternal quality of dedication to God pervades a truly sacred marriage.
7. Death – For many Filipinos, a death of a relative is an opportunity to strengthen ties in the family.

The Philippines is the home of some unique death rituals that are partly religious and mostly superstitious.

After the death of a person, a nine-day period of having a novena of prayers and masses offered up to the deceased is held. Another period follows after death, the 40-day mourning period. A ceremonial mass is held at the end of this 40-day period. Common belief states that the soul goes to Heaven after these 40 days, following the belief that Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven after the said period of days.

8. Society – The primary ancestors of Filipinos are Malays who came from the Southeastern Asian country. The Philippines is a combined society, both singular and plural in form. It is singular as one nation, but plural in that it is fragmented geographically and culturally. Although different in numerous ways, the Filipinos are very hospitable and give appropriate respect to everybody regardless of race, culture and belief.
9. Christmas in the Philippines is considered as one of the biggest holidays in the archipelago. We earned the distinction of celebrating the world's longest Christmas season with Christmas carols heard as early as September. For many Filipinos, the true essence of Christmas is not gift giving but sharing this special holy day with family.
10. Fiestas – Every town and city in the Philippines has a fiesta of its own; whatever time of the year it is, there's sure to be a fiesta going on somewhere.

Fiestas in the Philippines are held to celebrate a patron saint. It is part and parcel of Filipino culture through good times and bad times, it must go on.

11. Living with parents – Filipinos highly value the presence of family more than anything. Adult children living with their parents is another Filipino tradition that makes them exceptional. Unlike in the United States where children leave the home after finishing high school or college, many Filipinos continue living with parents until they get married.

Characteristics of Filipino Culture

1. The Filipino people are very resilient.
2. Filipinos take pride in their families.
3. Filipinos are very religious.
4. Filipinos are very respectful.
5. Filipinos help one another.
6. Filipinos value traditions and culture.
7. Filipinos have the longest Christmas celebrations.
8. Filipinos love art and architecture.
9. The Filipinos are hospitable people.

Filipino Family Values

1. *Paggalang* (Respect)
2. *Pakikisama* (Helping Others)
3. *Utang na Loob* (Debt of Gratitude)
4. *Pagpapahalaga sa Pamilya* (Prioritizing Family)
5. *Hiya* (Shame) – This controls the social behaviors and interactions of a Filipino. It is the value that drives a Filipino to be obedient and respectful to their parents, older siblings, and other authorities. This is also a key ingredient in the loyalty of one's family.
6. *Damayan system* – extending sympathy for people who lost their loved ones.
7. *Compassionate* – a Filipino trait of being sympathetic to others even the person is a stranger.
8. *Fun-loving trait* – a trait found in most Filipinos, a trait that makes them unique that even in times of calamities and other challenges in life, they always have something to be happy about, a reason to celebrate.

Social Values of the Filipinos

1. *High regard for amor propio* (self-esteem)
2. *Smooth interpersonal relationships*
3. *Personal alliance system*
4. *The Compadre System* – god parenthood or sponsorship
5. *Utang na loob*
6. *Suki relationship* – market-exchange partnership.
7. *Friendship*

Weaknesses of the Filipino Character

1. *Passivity and lack of initiative*
2. *Colonial mentality* – refers to the attitude the Filipinos feel that products coming from other countries are more superior than the local products.
3. *Kanya-kanya syndrome* – Filipinos have a selfish, self-serving attitude that generates a feeling of envy and competitiveness towards others, particularly one's peers who seem to have gained some status or prestige. Towards them, the Filipino demonstrates the so-called crab mentality.

It is also evident in the personal ambition and the drive for power and status that is completely insensitive to the common good. This characteristic is also evident in the lack of a sense of service among people in the government bureaucracy.

4. *Extreme personalism* – It is manifested in the tendency to give personal interpretations to actions, i.e., “taking things personally.” Personalism is also manifested in the necessity for the establishment of personal relationships before any business or work relationships can be successful.
5. *Extreme family centeredness*
6. *Lack of discipline*
7. *Lack of self-analysis and reflection*
8. *Ningas cogan* – A Filipino attitude of being enthusiastic only during the start of new undertaking but ends dismally in accomplishing nothing.
9. *Gaya-Gaya Attitude* – A Filipino attitude of imitating or copying other culture specifically in mode of dressing, language, fashion, trend or even haircut.

