

Ensaio 24

Tópico 2

Humans, like most other mammals, are born helpless and dependent on their parents, and in this specific case, they are dependent on their tribe – that is, any group with absolutely any link in common, even something as meaningless and fragile as “belonging to this group”. Without exceptions, in this tribe there will be concepts of right and wrong and roles of various types – of gender, class, etc – that any new addition will need to adhere to. In case signs of rejection show themselves, which they likely will during childhood or adolescence, the person will suffer punishments raging from psychological or emotional, such as belittling and taunting, to physical or sexual, such as torture and “correction rape”.

Although it would be nice to imagine such occurrences were left on the past, since now there’s democracy and different beliefs and behaviours are to be accepted, they were not and some are not even uncommon or frowned upon often. The religious indoctrination of children into catholicism (and most religions), for example, relies, in part, on the repression of their right to question and disagree dogmas or certain ideas, by the unfair moral judgement that such views or behaviours are wrong – blasphemous, and by the underlying threat of a very real and cruel eternal punishment in hell. Another example would be an emotionally abusive mother, that uses their status as “mother” to bend their child moral view to their favour – for instance, yelling “why do you insist on rejecting me? This only causes pain!” when the child refuses to do something detrimental to themselves, but that would be fun to the mother.

The proposed reason why certain kinds of punishment due to objection or disagreement “pass” the radar of the collective conscience of a society supposedly democratic, that should praise diversity of thought and protect the helpless, is simple: culture. In the first example given, religious indoctrination isn’t questioned because it is common and accepted; “everyone” goes through it, and so, we assume it should not cause any harm. Some, likely from the religion itself, might even go as far as to say it is *good*, since, according to them, it prevents the child from going to hell. In the second example given, the emotionally abusive mother would be given a pass by most people for the culture view of mothers as kind, caring, devoted and loving, as well as people their children must love and obey.

Considering, then, that life is made of choices, and that we choose based on what we value, we can make a careful observation: in handing familiarity and experiences the sole and unquestionable position to dictate what is valueable, we are handing our own autonomy, merely living as expected, without much conscious thought of our own. We not only don’t get to choose what to do according to what makes sense to us, but also become susceptible to manipulation and external influence more easily. Kant has previously proposed that, to lie to a person robs them of their right to choose, for their reality comes distorted to accommodate their lie. What to say to someone who refuses, then, to question what they were taught and their take away from experiences? They become a moral and intellectual slave to their uncontrollable circumstances.

No matter how sacred and unquestionable some beliefs and views might be to someone, if they are truly right, they will sustain the scrutiny. If they are not, then they were never right, and should have never been sacred.

To question beliefs require, quite obviously, that you distance yourself from every experience you've had, every belief, every person, for time enough to take an objective look at them. In order to do this, one must distance oneself from their experiences and universalize – that is, viewing things in the rawest way possible, as if you were seeing them for the very first time, and then, asking yourself if these things should or not be practiced or, at least, accepted, by everyone. These questions, of course, begs for criteria. Who says what should or should not be accepted or practiced by everyone?

The answer to that is, very plainly, logic and universalism. Logic has no ties to culture and can be agreed upon and understood by every human with sufficient cognitive development. Logic by itself, however, is amoral. Logical sense doesn't imply moral judgement, for instance, "Every human is mortal, you are human, therefore you are mortal" is a logic argument, however, has no moral implications – being correct does not imply being good, or right. Then comes universalism – one should determine a starting point that is common to everyone – such as "pain is bad" – and build from it logical implications, for example:

P1:Pain is bad

P2:The mother's demand causes pain

C:The mother's demand is bad

P1: The mother's demand is bad.

P2: The mother knows it is bad (her child told) and acted as if it isn't.

C: The mother's behaviour was bad.

Since neither logic nor universalism vary from culture to culture, then the moral system created becomes like a universally valid moral law, which everyone should follow.

Like culture and experience, logic and universalism do not bend as we please, it could be argued that we are taking control from incontrollable views, like those derived from experience and circumstance, and handing it to other incontrollable views, like logical and universal ones, essentially losing our autonomy again and rendering the whole process useless. However, such train of thought implies that, in order to be autonomous, you must have full control, which would never be true to any human, and, of course, the term is not used this way by anyone. Autonomy means that you do not depend on others, you can, metaphorically, walk on your own – which this sort of morality would, indeed, allow – logic is not a person or group. So the argument is false.

This model of morality is not to be forced upon anybody – it would be impossible to do so. No human can make another think for themselves; that is a contradiction in itself, and due to that, the start of the journey to finding out what actually should be done necessarily grants the most basic form of autonomy; the intellectual one.