AJ ACADEMIC JOURNALS
expand your knowledge

Journal of Philosophy and Culture
A Journal of the Department of Classics and Philosophy, University of Cape Coast

Full Length Research Paper

Safuu: The indigenous Oromo moral thought

Dasta Alamayo

Department of Philosophy, Wollega University, Ethiopia.

Human beings have diligently attempted to answer the question of "how one ought to live" since their existence as a social being. Every society and every individual has attempted to answer the question in accordance with their own particular problem and social structures. Different attempts have been made, and different moral systems have been developed by Western philosophers, among which consequentialism and deontology are the most dominant ones. However, these Western moral theories failed to solve the problems of Africans. The problem of the social structures and worldviews of both Africa and West are largely different. This paper introduces and analyzes one indigenous moral system of the Oromo people of East Africa which is called Safuu. As Safuu is an indigenous moral system and not much is found about it in a written form, the researcher uses written and oral texts as his own witness- since he was born and raised in the Oromo society as sources of the necessary information. After thoroughly discussing each of them, the researcher then critically examined them and presented his final argument. It is argued that "absolute consequentialism" results in more moral problems than it solves, and that "pure deontology" is nonexistent or impossible due to teleological interpretation of its principles or its incompatibility with human nature respectively; and also that Safuu can correct the problems of these two moral theories and provide a middle ground for deontology and consequentialism.

Key words: Safuu, Oromo moral thought, Oromoo environmental ethics, Indigenous morality.

INTRODUCTION

The question of how one ought to act on the issue of morality has become an undeniable part of humanity and remains important in our attempt to make the world a better place. Different ethical theories have been developed in response to this fundamental question of humanity and the question of how one ought to live.

Teleology and deontology are two of the dominant Western formulated moral theories in response to this basic question of morality. These theories, besides the problems they solve, have further brought different problems for different philosophers and non-philosophers

to debate about. On one hand, these Western-formulated deontology and teleology so far have their own drawbacks which make their application unlikely to real life. On the other hand, they failed to address African problems so far, and the problems of the social structures and worldview of both Africa and the West are largely different. Therefore, having this in mind, in this paper, the author tried to solve the problem of morality by forwarding a third-best alternative moral theory, which is called *Safuu*, an indigenous moral system of the Oromo people of East Africa. Along with this, the work will try to show

E-mail: dasseealex@gmail.com.

that the people of Africa also have their own philosophy and indigenous knowledge, which are more relevant to their problems. Generally, after showing the drawbacks of both Deontology and Teleology, it is then argued that Safuu can replace the drawbacks of both theories.

Furthermore, the researcher wants his reader to note that Safuu is the morality and practice of the ancient Oromo people. Due to modernity and Western education, some parts of the Oromo people know little about safuu but do not practice it, while some know more but practice less of it. The rest (especially farmers and nomads who live in the rural areas of the state) know much about it and also practice it to a larger extent. Thus, it is hardly reasonable to say, that safuu is the practice of all the present day Oromo.

TELEOLOGY AND DEONTOLOGY

The term teleology comes from the Greek word "telos", which means *end* or *purpose*. Thus, teleology is a theory of morality that stresses the consequences of actions, and even makes the consequences of action the criterion or test of their rightness. Hence, action is judged right or wrong, moral or immoral, depending on what happens as a result of it.

According to teleology, "the right action is the one that produces or will probably produce a great ratio of good to evil as any other action; while, the wrong action is the one that does not (Velasquez, 2008:461)." It is to say that we are obliged only to do an act that can produce a greater amount of good over bad. For instance, helping a person in need is moral, if and only if, helping him produces a better result than not helping him.

On the other hand, the word deontology comes from the Greek "deon" which means *duty* or *obligation*. Thus, deontological ethics is a duty-based theory. In contrast to consequentialism, acting morally amounts to doing one's duty on whatever consequences might follow from this. "It is this idea that some actions are absolutely right or wrong regardless of the results which follows them, and distinguishes duty-based (also known as deontological) ethical theories from consequentialist theories (Warburton, 2004:40)." Deontological theories focus on types of actions rather than the particular consequences of those actions. Therefore, the consequences of our actions, whether they are pleasurable or painful, good or bad, either to the majority or individual agent, have nothing to do with the morality of our actions. What matters are not the consequences but the performances.

SAFUU

Safuu and the Waaqa

Every society has language, culture, political system, religion, philosophy, morality, legal system, and others. These political, religion, morality systems etc could be indigenous and peculiar to a given society. Although, there are times when societies share together the same morality or religion, or at least, some aspects of moral or religious thinking. However, moral thought, religion, and philosophy which are indigenous to a given society *might* not be found in a very organized and systematic way. Like any other society, the Oromo people have their language, indigenous political, religion, and moral systems.

The Oromo people are an African ethnic native group, found in the empire of Ethiopia and to a smaller extent in Kenya, Rwanda, and Tanzania. The Oromo people make up a significant portion of the population occupying the Horn of Africa. They constitute a population of over 30 million and are the single largest ethnicity in Ethiopia and the wider Horn of Africa, which is approximately over 30% of Ethiopia's population according to the 2007 census. Starting from the earliest times, they all used to speak the same language (*Afaan Oromoo)*, have one indigenous religion (*Waaqeffannaa)*, have one indigenous political system (*Gadaa),* and abide by the same moral system (Safuu).

The concern of this paper is the Safuu which is at the heart of the everyday lives of the Oromo. The Oromo people speak of Safuu when they eat and drink, when they attend a wedding, when they celebrate any kind of ritual, when they praise their *Waaqa* (God), during farming and harvest, during war and peace. Also, their socio-political system is known as Gadaa system, which has at its heart the principles of Safuu. The laws of the Gadaa system are derived from the basic principles of Safuu. Thus, taking Safuu out of the scene one cannot speak of Oromo religion, political system, and social structure.

Moreover, in order to have a full grasp of Safuu, we have to be clear first with what is at the heart of Safuu itself.

Waaqa

In Oromo society, the word Waaqa has two meanings (One is the vault of the sky as we see it and the other approximate what the English word *God* connotes). God, in the English language, is "the creator and ruler of the universe, the Supreme Being (Concise Oxford English Dictionary)".

But Waaqa in the Oromo sense comprises more than what is merely meant by *God.* "It comprises more, because it includes countless particular manifestations of *Waaqa* in this world, particularizations of his creative works which are conceived as beings (Bartels, 1983:89)." Accordingly, Waaqa is the sole creator of the cosmos and sole giver of life. For the Oromo, the existence of Waaqa

is confirmed by the very existence of life, heaven, and earth and also by the orderly movement that takes place between and within each of them. Furthermore, Waaqa is seen as the source of all life; and the act of giving life, in fact, is reserved to Him alone (Bartels, 1983: 91). The Oromo do not think Waaqa created only human beings. In some religions, it is believed that God *made* man and *created* other beings. But the Oromo think Waaqa created just all things.

Waaqa created everything through *ayyaana.* According to Gemetchu (1998), *ayyaana* refers to that by which and through which Waaqa creates everything. He further explains that ayyaana is in fact both that which causes something to come into being and that which becomes what it has caused (Megerssa 1998:41). In short, "Ayyaana, for the Oromo, is the creative act of thinking in which a thought becomes that which it mentally represents (Megerssa, 1998:44)." As it is Waaqas exceptional act to give life, wherever there is life there is Waaqa.

Furthermore, according to the Oromo, Waaqa is the source and guardian of truth and justice. He knows everything, can do anything, and nothing *good* happens on the earth without Him. No one can escape from Waaqa with his evil deeds either in his heart/thought or in action. One can understand this thinking from the Oromos of Metcha. Asafa Disasa once said: "Ganamaan ba'aniif Waaqa jalaa hinba'ani ," meaning that *man may set out early in the morning but he never will escape from Waaqa* (Bartels, 1983:98). They refrain not only from doing something bad but also from having evil thoughts, for they think Waaqa can see what they think in their heart and there is a proverb in Oromo culture: *Waaqni garaa dhagaa keessayyuu ni'arga-* Waaqa even sees in the heart of a stone. It is this Waaqa who is the giver and protector of Safuu. Moreover, Waaqa rewards those who respect and protect Safuu and withdraws from those who do not. The idea of Waaqas withdrawal needs further explanation.

In Judeo Christian thought, God punishes those who do not live according to his words. But in Oromo's view, Waaqa does not punish anybody for not respecting Safuu. He only withdraws from them. Waaqa, while withdrawing from those who do not respect Safuu, He, on the other hand, rewards those who have respect for Safuu with blessings.

The punishment, in fact, could be what happens as a result of the withdrawal of Waaqa. The Oromo people believe that when Waaqa withdraws life diminishes in all of its forms. There will no longer be fertility, peace, good health, material well-being, and so on. As a result of Waaqas withdrawal, explains Bartels (1983:104), that man has left victim to minor evil powers. It is these minor powers, rather than Waaqa himself that strikes man with misfortune for example, sickness or madness."

Thus, the extra motivation for respecting Safuu, as one can understand from the idea of Waaqas withdrawal, is not fear of the punishments Waaqa might inflict, but one's desire to get Waaqas blessing.

Safuu

The Oromos' use of the word Safuu in their daily lives makes it too difficult to define the concept using just a word or a statement.

Mirressa Gamtesa, quoted by Bartels, says the following about Safuu in Maccaa Oromoo: "[*Safuu*] stands for everything that we do not understand, including a person's evil deed (Bartels, 1983:331). The other speaker, Asafa Disasa, says: "Having [*safuu*] means that you know how to behave according to the laws of our ancestors…. (Bartels, 1983:331)" Waquma Tolera, another member of the Macca Oromo further explains Safuu saying: People say '[safuu]' when they hear things they do not want to hear. They also say '[safuu]' of things they do not understand; it is as if they say: 'We do not understand these things. Only Waaqa knows' (Bartels, 1983:332).

From the above quotes, one can understand that Safuu is a multifunctional concept. Sometimes it is said of behavior of the majesty of Waaqa, and sometimes of the things beyond one's understandings. However, it is most commonly conceived, amongst the Oromo as a whole, and as a principle of deep moral honor and accountability based on respect for Waaqa.

For the purpose of this paper, Safuu is used only as a moral concept. The other thing is that there is no word of equivalent meaning with English words *moral* and *immoral* in Afaan Oromoo. So the researcher used "It is safuu" or "It is against safuu" or "It is breaking safuu" to say *it is immoral*. *Being moral* will have the same meaning as "respecting Safuu" or "knowing Safuu" throughout this paper. For example (i) John is moral = John respects/knows Safuu, (ii) It is immoral to kill = It is Safuu to kill. If one says *there is safuu* between people and/or things, it does not mean there is an *immorality* between them. It is to say that *there is an ethical relationship* between them.

According to the Oromo, safuu is not the law of man. Human laws are made by men to address certain problems. Safuu is not made for and given to the Oromo by man; only Waaqa gives safuu. "It is Waaqas' will that safuu exist, Safuu is something from Waaqa and the earth (Bartels 1983:333)." Man only finds out about sufuu and abides by it. Oromo people have laws, but they never see these laws and Safuu as equivalent. The following words of Shagerdi Bukko, clearly point out the difference between the laws of man and the laws of Safuu:

The law of Makko Billi was a good law; so the people accepted it. But Safuu comes from Waaqa (God) and the earth. We never say: '[Safuu] comes from Makko Billi'; we

only say: Safuu comes from Waaqa . Nor do we ever speak of the *law of Safuu*; we speak of the law of Makko Billi (Bartels, 1983:335).

However, the Oromo people think safuu is the basis of the laws of man. Every man made law must conform to Safuu. If there is any law that contradicts Safuu, that law would be rejected right away.

The Oromo people think Waaqa created everything with boundaries between and within each of them. Each one of them is given a place of its own and lives according to their own *ayyaana*. All of them are different from each other and unique. Each of them has to keep the distance put by Waaqa between them, and follow their own way. This is a cosmic and social order the Oromos think, Waaqa put there; and that to which every creature must conform. None of the creatures, including man, should overstep the boundary. It is this cosmic and social order, in general, that we call Safuu. *Safuu is respecting this Waaqa made cosmic and social structure, living only according to one's own ayyaana, letting others live according to theirs, and keeping the distance between oneself and the others.*

According to the principles of Safuu, every creature, especially human, has the responsibility to maintain this cosmic order. Every creature lives just the way it is created to live according to the ayyaana of its own. Therefore, it is not good to try to alter the way things function. It is Safuu to change the world order, and there is an idea that *things are at their best state when they are allowed to be the way Waaqa has created them,* which underlies this kind of respect. Everything in nature exists the way its nature allows it to exist, and it is wrong to change the lifestyle of any member even if changing it best serves as a human interest.

Safuu is not in anybody or anything but it is between everyone and everything. Waaqa has already put Safuu out there, and it is up to man to understand it and exhibit it, towards everyone and everything. It is this understanding of Safuu that makes one wise, according to the Oromo people. But it has to be noted that the Oromo people give emphasis not only to the understanding of Safuu but also to its exhibition. A wisdom that is not practicalized is not worth having. "A wise man", Gemetchu Megersa states, is not a man who merely knows; it is rather a man who lives his knowledge (Megerssa, 1998:43). Therefore, a morally wise life is lived when one understands Safuu and exhibits it through keeping the distance between oneself and all other creatures, and through paying due respect to all things.

The other point worth mentioning is that Waaqa himself is bound by Safuu. The Oromo people think that even Waaqa, being the source and the sole giver of Safuu, is not beyond Safuu. There is Safuu for Waaqa Himself. Also, there are expectations and assumptions that people have about the nature of Waaqa, and it is Safuu for Waaqa to not live up to the assumption and expectation of people. Waaqa has to live like Waaqa , and not like man. If Waaqa fails to exhibit the Waaqa like characteristics and if He does not respect safuu, then the people shall stand up against Him and ask Him to be more like Waaqa. And this in turn keeps the balance between the creator and creature.

Accordingly, for the Oromo people, having absolute control over His creations and the creator cannot do whatever He likes to His creation, especially when the things are against safuu. The creator, has to pay due respect to His creation and has to keep the distance between Him and His creation. Just as people keep the distance between them, other creatures, and Waaqa, Waaqa also has to keep the distance between Him and the people so that the cosmic order would not be spoiled. One of the informers of Bartels, while explaining safuu between him and his children, says: " safuu is not something in children, nor is it in me, it is between us: they pay respect to me and I pay respect to them, and we do this in many different ways (Bartels 1983:333)." The extension of this thought clearly explains that there is also safuu between Waaqa and man. Thus, Waaqa Himself is not absolutely absolute to go against and beyond safuu.

Freedom and free will are essences of morality. If we are forced to make some decisions, we would not be considered moral even if the decision we made is a moral decision, for we are forced and did not make the decision on our freewill. When one looks at safuu and Waaqa, it may seem to be simply following some orders from a Supreme Being which does not involve our freewill. But when the principles of safuu and the role of Waaqa in Oromo society are closely examined, it becomes clear that honoring and dishonoring safuu is down to the will and choice of the individual. Man is absolutely free to abide and not to abide by safuu. Nobody, not even Waaqa , is involved in one's moral decision making.

God of the Oromo does not give specific commandments like, for example: You shall not kill, You shall not commit adultery, and You shall tell the truth, etc. These kinds of duties are what Oromo people themselves derive from the general principle of safuu, that is already there using their rational capacity. It is up to the people, or the individual in that community, to make particular moral laws. The Oromo never speak of any kind of commandment that Waaqa has given them. Also, they only speak of how Waaqa created all things putting distance between them, so that the cosmic system operates properly, and that they have to keep this distance so as to keep the balance of nature. You look at the universe, at nature, and make a decision that enhances the proper functioning of the cosmos in addition to the decisions' consequence to yourself. Making such a decision totally depends on the agent, and no external body forces the agent. The God of the Oromo does not force any moral choice and does not punish

anybody for not acting morally. He only rewards with blessings those who uphold safuu and withdraws from those who are evil, for His nature, particularly holiness, makes it impossible for God to reside in the lives of the evils.

In general, safuu is not about specific laws. It is about specific acts and laws conforming to the general principles of the cosmic order. One has to remember that the general principle of safuu is to make the cosmos harmonious and the world a better place, for all things by keeping the distance between all things. There is a general system, cosmic-system, and every man has to aim at keeping this general cosmic system healthy, for when the general system is unhealthy there is no way the member of the system remains healthy.

Man is absolutely free in choosing a specific course of action and way of life. However, what one chooses must be something that conforms to the general principle of the cosmic system. Here one might object that such a choice is not a choice based on one's own reason and free will, since there is already a principle to which our choice has to conform. But this kind of question is not logical. It is true that unless the whole system is healthy the member of the system cannot be healthy, and hence man has to keep the system in harmony to live a harmonious and happy life. Therefore, it is logical to act and choose a course of action that conforms to the general cosmic-principle to make the cosmos a better place for everyone. What is illogical is to use one's own reason and freewill for self-destruction.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The moral problem of absolute consequentialism

On this planet no one is left alone; everyone is bound together socially, economically, and politically. The source of most of what we use either to meet the needs of our survival or to make our lives luxurious is what we have in common. There are a mutual interference and interdependence, without which we cannot get what we need.

However, there is something unreliable about human interdependence. There is a conflict between self-interest and common interest; one cannot cast off human relations. Man tends to put himself first towards some benefits and last against some harm. Hobbes argues that all egoistic people always act on their own self-interest to obtain gratification and avoid harm (Pojman, 1998, p. 489). In the extreme case, some want to live even at the expense of the other. This can be justified by the reality we see in the society, where someone kills or seriously harms the other only because the other man is against her single benefit, or because their interest towards something coincides. Especially, in our modern world

these selfishness, egoism, and self- centeredness have become the defining nature of human beings who, at the same time, are social beings.

It is because of the incompatibility of human interest and human nature and the mode of human existence that ethics is called forth. But the question is: Which ethics or what kind of ethics? Consequentialism or deontology? Consequentialism says whether an act is right or wrong depends on the result of the act. Deontology, on the other hand, states that acting morally amounts to doing one's duty and whatever consequences might follow from this. This section of the paper shows the moral and social problem of "*absolute* consequentialism". Here the adjective *absolute* should be understood as *anything taken to its extreme form.*

Consequentialism is an ethical theory that evaluates the morality of an action by its consequences. This is based on two principles: First, whether an act is right or wrong depends on the result of the act. Second, the more good consequences an act produces, the better or more right than the act is. That is to say, whatever the specific act is, the end justifies the means. Is such moral theory safely applicable to an egoistic and self centered human being without causing any further problem? The answer is "No". The author briefly discusses why and presents his general critique against consequentialism below.

First of all, for the question "why?" does not relate to the consequences and it asks about the essence or intention of the act. Teleology, in general, is unable to adequately explain why morally wrong action is wrong and why morally right action is right. The consequences of a particular action can never remain the same all the time and everywhere, place, and the condition determine the outcome. Even within the same context the goodness and badness of the consequences of that particular act vary from person to person. Hence, depending only on its result to explain 'why' an action is morally good or bad is groundless.

Consequentialism is not *directive,* in that it does not tell what one ought to or ought not to do, and in what way one ought to live beforehand. In consequentialism one has to wait for its consequence to decide the morality of a given act. This in turn makes a society unable to make a moral decision before engaging in action.

Even if the consequentialist assumption says: "whether an act is morally right or wrong depends only on the results of the act" is considered to be right, there is still another problem that it entails. This problem is the mismatch between intention and the end result. It is obvious that no one can know, with absolute certainty, the outcome of her act beforehand, but rather acts with some intentions; about the result of his act, in his mind. The problem arises when the agents' intended consequences and the actual outcome fail to match. Good results may be intended and the result might be the exact opposite of what is intended. Such a problem is

harmful not only to society but also to the agent himself. As a result, humans become stance-less towards and/or against the morality of any particular act, for they know little or nothing about its result with certainty. However, "it is when we *aren't* clear about the consequences that we need help (Miller, 1996:411)."

It is not always right to decide the morality of an act based on an immediate pleasure or goodness of the act, for a little pleasure of today might turn out to be an enduring pain. Then what would be the fate of an act that is today considered right because of its short-term pleasure and turn out to be an act of long-lasting pain in the future?

Its application to real-life really seems very difficult and impractical. In consequentialism, individuals have to calculate the consequences of their acts before they make ethical decisions (remember hedonistic calculus). This makes the task too difficult for two reasons. One, it is not possible to measure pleasure since we do not have any kind of measurement for pleasure and pain, and also to measure and compare different pleasures. For instance, how could we compare the pleasure a soccer fan gets from watching his team scoring a great goal with the pleasure a music fan gets from listening to his favorite song? Generally, "It is extremely difficult to measure happiness and to compare the happiness of different people (Warburton, 2004:49)." And two, the calculation of consequences before making moral decisions results in time delay- a time delay that may cause further moral problems.

Now the researcher tried to show the moral problems that come with adopting *absolute consequentialism* as one's moral principle. What would happen if all members of a given society adopted *absolute consequentialism*? First, people become uncertain about how they would behave, for it would be difficult to forecast the moral decisions that other people would make. Second, this uncertainty would result in a collapse of mutual trust in society.

This comes from the fear that any prejudice towards something or someone that is directly related to the agent's interest would more strongly influence moral decisions. Since there is no certainty but uncertainty, no mutual trust but distrust in a given society, every member of that society would always be ready to attack first, for she is afraid of being attacked. This may take us back into what Hobbes calls the *State of Nature* where every man is against every man. This would result in social and moral crises. No one knows whether what someone is going to do is moral or immoral, harmful or beneficial to him.

He prefers to act immorally in order to protect himself against the selfish actions of others which he thinks might be immoral and harmful to him. Hence, morality lacks essence, and may even cease to exist.

However, it has to be clear that the author is not against

consequences as a whole. To aim towards something having, a goal and purpose in life are what distinguishes human beings from other beings. What always guides humans is a rational purpose/goal. An aimless or goalless life and acts are boring and meaningless. However, what is wrong with consequentialism is that consequence is the *sole* criterion of morality.

The impossibility of pure deontology

Deontology is a moral principle that neither stresses the agent nor the consequences, but rather the performance of the act. It totally ignores the consequences of the act. According to Deontologism, acting morally amounts to doing one's duty, regardless of whatever consequences might follow from that. It even claims that an act would lack its morality the time the agent considers its consequences while acting. But the question is: Is such a moral principle really applicable? Is pure deontology possible? Is Kant's Categorical Imperative (CI) really deontological? Does it not have any teleological implication or interpretation? Or is pure deontology compatible with human nature?

To start with, even if we assume that deontology is a right moral principle, it has some general weaknesses and immoral implications. First, Kant's deontological moral system is too anthropocentric. It neglects the value of nature, for the system treats only human beings as ends in themselves and puts only humans at the center of morality. "… [Deontology] has the effect of stripping nature of its values and downplaying any moral responsibility we have toward [nature] (L. Miller 1996:429)." This implies that other issues carry no moral weight in moral decision-making. This causes abuse of nature, for the system gives no moral consideration and moral space to nature and its constituents.

The other problem with Kant's moral theory arises when duties conflict. "Kant regards all duties as absolute, and he does not foresee the possibility that they may come into conflict with one another and we will have to choose between them (Greetham, 2006:306)." Kant's theory does not tell us what to do when there is a conflict of duties (Kant, 1964). Take, for instance, the duty of telling the truth and protecting one's friend. Should I lie to a serial killer where my friend is and save him or should I tell him the truth and get my friend killed? According to deontology, telling the truth and protecting my friend is equally my duty; that is if I lie to that serial killer I am acting immorally, and if I fail to protect my friend I am acting immorally again. Apparently, the duty to prevent harm to others conflicts with the duty not to lie and there is no higher law or duty to determine which takes precedence. Thus, Kant's theory does not give guidance when one is faced with conflicting duties.

The above points are the critiques that are presented

assuming that *pure deontology* is possible. But is *pure deontology* possible? Is there any teleological interpretation and implication of Kant himself and his CI? Answering the question "Is *pure deontology* possible?" needs to first assess human nature. Apparently, human beings are selfish, egoistic, and self-centered creatures that necessarily have to exist socially. And every human being is goal-oriented and purposeful. There is no human being goalless and no human action is done without purpose. Aristotle, in his *Nicomachean Ethics,* claims that "[e]very art and every enquiry, and similarly, every action and choice is thought to aim at some good… (Cahn, 2003:610)." Being purposeful, having a rational goal, and an end to achieve is one of the defining characteristics of human beings.

Every man acts with the consequences of his actions in mind. Moreover, we obey CI itself because of, let us say, its positive consequences. Thus, deontology seems to be incompatible with human nature and interest, for it neglects and denies all consequences of our acts. It gives no consideration for that to which humans give great consideration.

Moreover, more can be said of its impossibility in its purest sense. In the first place, why do humans need the concept of morality? Why do humans need moral theories? What is the purpose, if any, of ethical theories, be it Teleology or Deontology? Specifically, what is the use of a deontological moral system? Do we need and practice it for its good consequences or just because it is a good moral system in itself? If it is because it is a good moral system in itself, why is it good? What makes it a good moral system? Or is it because it is our duty to follow? If it is simply our duty to follow, why do we take it as a duty, and why do we need to follow our duty?

As understood, humans need morality and moral systems to create a good and harmonized society. Every moral theory should aim at creating a good place for each and every individual living and/or nonliving being. This is the end or goal of any ethical system. If we are to prefer something over another thing, it is because we get an advantage that we cannot get from that which we rejected. If we prefer deontology over other moral theories, that is because of its good consequence. Basically, Kant rejects consequentialism because of its negative consequences on human society; and adopts deontology because of its positive impacts on humanity and human life.

Kant himself would not have proposed such moral theory as deontology if following and adopting it would result in no good consequences.

Now let us proceed to what Kant calls the fundamental principle of our moral duties: *Categorical Imperative, CI.* CI unconditionally commands and obligates us to exercise our will in a particular way without any exceptions and expectations. The point, however, is not CI, but its formulations. Hereunder, we will see that Kant's formulation of CI has a teleological implication. The first version of the formulation of CI says: *Act only in accordance to that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it becomes a universal law* (Paton, 1956:30). It is to say do whatever duty that can be universalized- that anyone can and ought to do. This, in turn, is to say do not do to others whatever is painful to you. Here Kant hides *the golden rule*, which is not *categorically imperative* but rather *hypothetically imperative*, within this formulation of CI. In Kant's view, what would happen if one tries to universalize stealing one's property? Simple; her property will also be stolen. Since nobody wants her property to be stolen, she does not try to universalize stealing. What would happen if one universalizes promise-keeping? Surely, the promisee becomes certain that the promisor will keep his words. This is what every rational being wants. But this can never be purely deontological, for everyone does which is not harmful if it is done to her by others. That is, people in advance calculate the consequences of their action to themselves if they allow that particular act to be universalized by performing the act. If they think the act they are about to engage in results in bad consequences to themselves when universalized, then they refrain from performing the action. This implies that people consider the consequences of their acts before formulating their CI, and this, in turn, makes the CI consequential. In the first chapter of his *Utilitarianism,* Mill claims that the Universal Law formulation of the CI could only sensibly be interpreted as a test of the consequences of universal adoption of a maxim.

Finally, if we look at Kant's basis when he formulates CI, it is not non-consequentialist, for he urges man to do what can be universalized without any contradiction, and what can be universalized without any contradiction must be what is useful to everyone, and what everyone wants. Such an act must be useful if one does it to others and others do to her, like promise-keeping. When I keep my promise, it means that I am willing to universalize promise-keeping, for I want others to keep their promise, be it their promise to me or to anybody else. Breaking my promise entails that I am willing to universalize promise-breaking which in the long run results in others breaking their promise to me. But because I do not want to have others breaking their promise to me, I rather tend to keep my promise. Here one should note that I am keeping my promise not only because keeping a promise is my duty, but that I am also considering the consequence of universalizing keeping and/or breaking a promise. It is after considering the consequences of both promise-keeping and promise-breaking that I decide to take an action. Hence, CI still is not free of teleological interpretation.

Therefore, Kant's deontology is not genuinely and purely deontological. Generally, because of its incompatibility with human nature, and that CI itself

implies a teleological interpretation, the existence of *deontology* in the *purest sense* of the term and its application to human life is impossible. We cannot separate the end from human nature, and also from CI itself-and hence it is contradictory to speak of deontology.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SAFUU, DEONTOLOGY, AND TELEOLOGY

Safuu cannot be interpreted as teleological or deontological. It is not teleology because it does not measure the rightness or wrongness of an act solely by its consequences to the agent or the majority. It does not say an act is right if it brings the most happiness for the greatest number of people or self, and wrong if it fails to do so. According to safuu, for instance, the immorality of lying depends on whether the act in question is against the cosmic-order or not. But Safuu makes exceptions here. If, for instance, person X lies to a serial killer about person Y hiding in his home, X's lying cannot be considered immoral. Because the lie keeps the cosmic-order unspoiled than telling the truth does *at that very moment*, and not because lying serves person X's purpose.

Safuu is different from consequentialism in that it does not emphasize the immediate consequences of our action alone. What really matters, according to consequentialism, is the consequence of actions. It is a pleasure principle. But that is not the case with safuu. In safuu, it is not the consequence of actions that help us tell whether or not the action is right. This, however, does not mean that safuu considers no consequences of human action. It actually does, but not the same way as consequentialism does.

Safuu, after all, is based on the *respecting and keeping the distance between things* principle. It commands us to respect every living and nonliving being and keep the distance between us and all of them. If humans fail to do so, then the balance of cosmic order would be disturbed. Thus any action of man must be in conformity with the law of cosmic and social order. Man must keep this order alive and healthy. Here man is emphasized because the Oromo think that it is the only man who is able to perform things consciously and because man has a physical and mental advantage over all other beings. This physical and mental advantage of man over the other beings put the greatest responsibility of keeping the cosmic order on the shoulder of a man. Man has to pay due respect and keep the distance between herself and other beings while assisting other beings to do so. Thus every action of man is directed toward this end- maintaining the healthy cosmic and social order. This implies that safuu consists of a teleological element.

Though safuu embraces a teleological element in itself, it is wrong to consider it as absolute consequentialism. It is different from absolute consequentialism in many ways. Safuu neither aims at maximizing pleasure for oneself nor at advancing the general welfare of the greatest number of the people, nor even of the whole human society. It is rather aimed at maintaining the cosmic order that holds all living and nonliving beings together.

For Safuu is a holistic morality, the Oromo do not have in mind the wellbeing of a human being alone while acting. They rather have in mind the general wellbeing of all the constituents of the cosmos-including living and nonliving beings. Every member of the cosmos matters alike to the Oromo. Here it is worth noting the Oromo view of nature and man.

For the Oromo, a human being is in the world to the same extent animals and other nonliving beings are. They do not speak of the world and themselves separately. They think they are in the world. They do not think they are what they are independent of the world. They are what they are as a result of their being-in-the-world and what they made of themselves. Consequently, according to safuu, everything matters. Everything holds moral value. Therefore, when the issue of morality is raised, the morality of a specific action is considered with regard to every member of the cosmos; not with regards to human beings alone.

Generally, safuu considers the wellbeing of the cosmos as a whole. Whatever action a man engages in, it is safuu regardless of the good consequences of the action for the agent if it disturbs the cosmic and social order. In safuu, no one except the whole universe itself is at the heart of our moral decision-making. No man's interest is given the highest priority in formulating morality. In fact, every man's interest should, according to safuu, be maintaining the smooth functioning of the cosmic-order. Accordingly, every man's action is directed towards one end- *keeping the balance of nature by paying deep respect to nature and keeping the distance Waaqa has put between each member of the universe.*

In deontological morality, only humans have moral standing. This results in the abuse of nature as a whole. It is criticized by different scholars for being highly anthropocentric. But safuu gives moral weight to every member of the cosmos. One has to consider the morality of an act towards not only humans but also towards every member of the cosmos before engaging in the action. Animals and plants hold high moral weight, as an object of morality. Safuu urges everyone to consider animals and plants before making any moral decision. The Oromo think that everything has an intrinsic value. However, only human is considered to be a *moral agent*. Only human is capable of being moral and has the responsibility to act morally. Other beings are just *moral patients*. They have a moral stand since they are endowed with an intrinsic value, but they do not have moral responsibility. Safuu commands humans that moral attitudes such as moral

concern, respect, value, and care ought to be directed also towards every non-human member of the cosmos.

Moreover, as it is with deontology, safuu does not divorce consideration of goals or end from our action. Safuu considers the consequences of *our action* and the consequences of *our performing the action*. According to deontology, a man fails to be a morally right person when she considers the consequences, if any, of her action. Accordingly, no matter how good an action is in itself, it would not be moral if the doer considers its consequences while performing the act. For instance, Kant claims that if you expect a reward from God while providing a poor person with something to eat, you are not acting morally.

This, as argued above, contradicts goal-oriented human nature. This makes the application of deontology unlikely. In contrast, safuu is free of such problems, for it considers the consequences of our action and the consequences of our doing the action. When one engages in an action, one has in mind the consequence of the act on the level of the general cosmos, and the consequences of one's engagement in the action on oneself.

The Oromo know that performing a good act maintains the cosmic-order, and also that the performer would be rewarded with a blessing from Waaqa for doing it. This puts in extra-motivation for the individual to be moral.

GENERAL IMPLICATION OF SAFUU

Safuu is an ethico-religious concept with an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God at its heart. Its principles are based on general assumptions like "*Yoon maqe Waaqni na arga"*, meaning "God sees if I misbehave", "*Dhugaa Waaqa, saala lafa hindhoksan"*, meaning "One cannot hide genital from earth and truth from Waaqa (God)", and the like. These are among the underlying principles from which emanates the Oromo moral system that rules every action of Oromo individuals. Such assumptions make safuu absolutely binding. Safuu, according to the Oromo, is everywhere. An old woman told Bartels that we have to abide by safuu on the road and at our work, for [safuu] is just everywhere (Bartels, 1983, p. 333).

No matter where one is, there is no escape from safuu. Safuu's universality is further made valid by Waaqa's omnipresence. It is Waaqa, no other man or one's own conscience, who looks after safuu; and who one thinks would see her if she plans to do or does something evil in secretly. One can get out of sight of everybody; or can silence her own conscience in order to achieve something. But one can never get out of sight of Waaqa. The principles of safuu, hence, are always binding and valid everywhere.

Furthermore, the morality that should be adopted has to be multifunctional that could solve, or at least improve political, social, and economic problems of the society. It should be one that is binding everywhere, and at any time. To make morality beyond the limits of space and time, there has to be a body, who is itself beyond the limits of space and time, which looks after the principles of the moral system.

Finally, the paper recommends that *we should formulate our moral principles not by assuming a godless universe*. Not having some eternal and absolute moral authority makes someone morally responsible only conditionally.

The existence of a Supreme Being gives no end to moral responsibility. Unlike the godless universe, if God is everywhere and always is, so is morality. One can get beyond any given limit, whether it is beyond the norms of her family and society, or beyond her own internalized norms. But it is impossible to ever get beyond the authority of an all-powerful and omnipresent God. Hence, it would be better to formulate a morality whose basis is God, for it is the existence of God, more than anything else, that makes moral norms eternal, absolute, and always binding.

Whenever making God at the heart of one's morality is suggested, the issue of the existence of God will be raised immediately. Does God exist? How can I make something I am not sure of its existence at the center of my moral system? These and other similar questions will be raised about the existence of God.

However, nobody is sure about the existence of God, and nor of its nonexistence. Both theists and atheists commit fallacy- *a fallacy of appeal to ignorance*- while taking a position on the existence of God, for both parties appeal to lack of evidence or proof for concluding this or that. Atheists mostly claim to the lack of evidence for the existence of God on the part of theists to conclude that God does not exist, and theists claim that God exists because His nonexistence has not yet been proved. Consequently, the matter of the existence of God is down to conviction. It is not the same as matters like "2+2= 4". One can have a conviction about the existence or nonexistence of God, but cannot have certainty. Now comes the idea of cost-benefit analysis. Since the claim about the existence and nonexistence of God is only a matter of conviction, we compare the advantages and disadvantages of having and not-having God at the center of one's moral system. Assuming a Godly universe while proposing morality is way better, for it helps to formulate a morality that has eternal and transcending moral authority as its basis.

A morality whose principles are absolutely binding because it has God at its heart, that makes the deontological assertion that morality should be absolutely binding possible, and that is compatible with human nature because it does not reject consequences of our action and our performing the action without causing

chaos like absolute consequentialism, for it considers the consequences of our action in terms of proper functioning of the cosmic system, not just oneself, is Safuu. For Safuu, besides its advantage in replacing the drawbacks of deontology and teleology, it is nearer to the Oromo people's worldview than any other ethical theories that exist, and is integrated with the life of the Oromo and hence easy to understand and practice. It is recommended that the Oromo people go back to this morality teaching of their growing-up-children and lead their life with it.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES

Bartels L (1983). Oromo Religion: Myth and Rites of the Western Oromo of Ethiopia. An Attempt to Understand. Berlin: Reimer 411 p.
Cahn SM (2003). Philosophy for the 21st Century: A Comprehensive Reader. New York: Oxford University Press.
Gemetchu M (1998). The Oromo Worldview. Interdisciplinary Seminar of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies 1:41.
Greetham B (2006). Philosophy. Norwich: Palgrave Macmillan. https://www.macmillanihe.com/resources/CW%20resources%20(by%20Author)/G/Greetham/Lecturer%20materials/Egoism.pdf
Kant I (1964). Ground Work of the Metaphysics of Moral, translation by H. J. Paton. Harper & Row: New York.
Miller EL (1996). Questions that Matter: An Invitation to philosophy 4e. USA: Mc Graw - Hill Companies.
Megerssa G (1998). The Oromo Worldview. Interdisciplinary Seminar of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies 1:41.
Pojman LP (1998). Philosophical Traditions: A Text with Readings. USA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
Velasquez M (2008). Philosophy: A Text with Readings 10e. USA: Thomson Wadsworth.
Warburton N (2004). Philosophy: The Basic 4e. London and New York: Routledge.Taylor and Francis Group.