

Summary

“Die Universalisierte Goldene Regel als Grundlage einer kulturübergreifenden Moral und Moralerziehung“

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Principles of a transcultural and/or transreligious moral education can only be based on a normative ethics resting, not on some historically revealed Divine Will, but on the will of the person acting – or supposed to act – himself. There seem to exist exactly three immediately applicable principles of morals which do justice to this requirement of autonomy of the will: the traditionally so-called Golden Rule – in what follows, I will call it the Singular Golden Rule (SGR) –, the Universalised Golden Rule (UGR), and Kant’s Categorical Imperative (CI). As has been shown elsewhere by means of a detailed linguistic analysis of ‘ought’-statements of one’s own idiolect in cooperation with an integrated logic of believing and willing (doxastico-theletic logic), SGR entails UGR, and UGR (and hence also SGR) entails CI. UGR and CI admit of a strict justification, and optimally so; for both of these principles are analytically true, namely, true solely in virtue of the semantical properties of the expressions occurring in their ordinary-language wordings. In contradistinction, for SGR no sufficient theoretical justification has been offered yet. As for a simple, unambiguous, and comprehensive applicability, UGR seems to me to be unmatched. Together, both rankings certainly suggest to take UGR, which has been mostly neglected by moral philosophers, much more seriously than has been done so far. Explicit formulations of the UGR have been handed down to us not only from Greek antiquity; implicit uses of it seem to be rather wide-spread in daily life; and its method of application (let me call it the ‘Nathan-David procedure’) has best been unfolded in a parable in the Old Testament. This method consists in the presentation – and, if necessary, interpretation, discussion, and multiple variation – of suitable tales, novels, films, dramatic works and even everyday situations which, as a rule at least, are characterised by anonymity, alienation, and, above all, negativity, that is, the tendency to arouse in the hearer’s or eyewitness’s mind disgust, anger, or wrath. Such negative emotional reactions are the only evidence that can be meaningfully required in order for the recipient to convince himself beyond doubt that he once for all disapproves of behaviour of the kind presented to him, and hence that he decidedly intends anybody, including himself, to act otherwise, namely, precisely the other way around. In other words: Such emotional evidence can make up the only conceivable verification for one’s own subjectively endorsed individual principles of willing and hence, due to the analyticity of UGR, for moral ‘ought’-judgements. So I take it that a pre-eminent task for moral teachers, educators, and parents ought to consist in finding (or inventing), presenting, varying, and discussing Nathan-David situations suitably tailored to children and youngsters of our century. Historians, psychologists of development and other empirical researchers can contribute to defending the authenticity of emotional – and hence also of moral – evidence and verification against objections that are plausible but, I take it, untenable.