

Addis Ababa University

School of Graduate Studies

SAFUU: THE INDIGENOUS OROMO MORAL SYSTEM

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in Philosophy**

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Dasta Alamayo Kenea, entitled: *Safuu: The Indigenous Oromo Moral System* and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in Philosophy complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a Master's degree in any other University, and that all sources used in this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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Dedication

To the genius minds of the earliest Oromos who came up with such an extraordinarily great moral system and to those who have done the great job of keeping its record.

Abstract

Human beings have diligently attempted to answer the question of “how ought one to live” since their existence as a social-being. This attempt has resulted in different ethical traditions and theories. Every society and every individual has attempted to answer the question in accordance with their own particular problem and social structures. In this thesis, I present two dominant Western moral theories- Teleology/Consequentialism and Deontology, and one indigenous moral system of the Oromo people of East Africa. This indigenous moral system of the Oromo is called Safuu. As Safuu is an indigenous moral system and not much is found about it in a written form, I use written and oral texts to collect the necessary information. I also use my own witness as a source of information since I was born and raised in the Oromo society. I lived all my life so far in this society being part of their practices, sharing their language and worldview, being subject and object of their morality, critically looking at their ways of lives, political and religious systems, etc. Generally, in this thesis, I used different kinds of written and oral texts including my own witness as sources of information I found necessary for the development of this thesis.

After thoroughly discussing each of them, I then critically examine them and present my final argument. I argue that “absolute consequentialism” results in more moral problems than it solves, and that “pure deontology” is nonexistent or impossible due to its incompatibility with human nature and teleological interpretation of its principles. Then I argue that Safuu, the indigenous Oromo moral system, could correct the problems of these two moral theories, Teleology and Deontology, and also solves some of the modern human problems namely environmental problem, and the problem of children and women’s right.

Thesis: Replacing the Drawbacks of Teleology and Deontology, Safuu Can Solve Some of the Modern Human Problems.

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Introduction

The issue of who we are and how we should act is tied directly to the question of morality. To a certain extent, we become what our acts do to and for us. In other words, our whatness and behaviors are largely direct products of our acts. Hence the question of how one ought to act or simply the issue of morality becomes the inescapable part of humanity. Throughout the journey of life, there is a question no man can escape: *A question of what one ought to do*. In our daily lives we ask questions about the morality of sexual relationships, about the ethics of using people, about taking responsibilities for the consequences of our actions, about the morality of abortion, about the ethics of using non-human beings, etc.

The aim of morality is to make the world a better place for everyone. On the way of trying to make the world a better place people invented theories and instruments that they think would help them. This gives rise to scientific advancement, modernity, and the systematic study of morality which could not indeed make the world any better. The world is rather facing serious problems caused by each of these (scientific advancement, modernity, and the systematic study of morality). In actual fact, the world seems to be better back then when it was being governed and guided by the indigenous knowledge of politics, morality, etc than it is today. So far different ethical theories have been formulated in response to the fundamental question of human being: the question of how ought one to live.

Teleology and Deontology are two of the Western-formulated moral theories in response to the question. 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 to real life unlikely, and on the other hand, they could not address African problems so far, for the problems, social structures, environment, and worldview of both the Africans and the Westerns are largely different. Therefore, having this in mind, I try to solve the problem of morality by forwarding a third best alternative moral theory, which is an indigenous moral thinking of one of the African tribe, to both Deontology and Teleology. Along with this, I will show that Africans have their own philosophy and indigenous knowledge which is relevant to their problems.

As every society faces the question of morality and tries to formulate theories that it thinks could solve its problems, so does the Oromo society. In this paper I present indigenous moral thinking of Oromo people of East Africa, which is called Safuu. Safuu is that which governs the Oromo universe. We cannot think of Oromo society without safuu. It is the principle of deep moral honor and accountability which is based on the respect for nature and keeping the distance that Waaqa (God) has put between them. After showing the drawbacks of both Deontology and Teleology, I then argue that Safuu can replace the drawbacks of both theories and that it can also solve some of the modern human problems like environmental problem, issues of children and women's right.

Generally, the thesis has four chapters. The first chapter, (chapter one), gives a general overview of morality and ethics. It discusses the three areas of ethics: Normative, Metaethics and Applied Ethic. It gives a detail account of Teleological and Deontological moral theories. In chapter two I present the concept of Safuu from what I read, interviewed and experienced myself for I was brought up in the society. It discusses the meaning, application, implication, extent of Safuu as the people, Oromo people, speak for themselves and practice it.

Chapter three presents critical assessment of the three moralities discussed in the previous chapters: Teleology, Deontology and Safuu. It presents my critiques of Deontology and Teleology in which I argue that *absolute consequentialism* results in further moral problems and *pure deontology* is impossible. It further discusses how Safuu corrects the problems of Deontology and Teleology, and how it solves some of the modern human problems. Issues of environment, women and children's right with respect to Safuu will be analyzed in detail under this chapter. The final chapter, chapter four, presents the summary of all chapters in brief, findings, recommendation and a short conclusion.

Furthermore, I want my reader to note that Safuu is the morality and practice of ancient Oromo. Nowadays, due to modernity and Western-produced-knowledge based education, some part of the Oromo people know little about safuu but do not practice; some know more but practice less while the rest (especially farmers and nomads who live in the rural areas of the state) know much about it and also practice it to larger extent. Thus it is hardly reasonable to say it is the practice of all the present day Oromo.

CHAPTER ONE

ETHICS AND MORALITY

The pursuit of moral knowledge has been existing within human society from the very beginning of humans existence as a society. It all started with the attempt to answer a question of how one ought to live. This general question is meaningful to every human individual. However, it is important to note that most answers to this question are of the ethical type. Many philosophers attempted to give ethical answers to this question. Some of them tried to set ethical frame work to decide which answer is ethical and which is not.

“Moral issues are an inescapable part of who we are.”¹ Much of what we are and do would be determined by our moral values. Undoubtedly, values could shape our thoughts, feelings, actions and perceptions. In a day to day life people face different kinds of moral questions. They raise questions about the morality of sexual relationship, ethics of using people, of slavery, of polygamy, of killing fellow humans, of cheating, of abortion, and so on. Whenever a person faces such moral questions it is up to her to answer them either verbally or practically. For the answers one gives to such moral questions determine who one is, one has to be careful and critical of one’s responses. But who or what should be the source or the ground of the moral conviction when one responds to such moral questions? Parents? Friends? Lovers...? No, says Velasquez. “To unthinkingly adopt the values proposed by your parents is to live your life according to those values others have chosen for you and not according to those you have chosen for yourself.”² This is just to say that one should not live the life people want her to live and do what others want her to do, or one should not live someone else’s life. Through her life one should move on a road she has mapped out for herself, and should live by values she has chosen for herself. This would lead one to decide to choose one’s own values. “To decide to choose one’s own values is to decide to philosophize. The attempt to examine one’s values, to shape and

¹ Manuel Velasquez, *Philosophy: A Text with Readings, 10e* (USA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008), 275.

² *Ibid.*, 276.

rethink them in the light of one's own experience and reason, is a philosophical task,"³ which, in fact, we call ethics.

1.1. What is Ethics and Morality?

1.1.1. Morality

The term morality has remained vague. Some moral thinkers thought that it is distinct from ethics. But in this thesis the term morality is used as Manuel Velasquez defines it in his book, *Philosophy: A text with Readings*. He says morality is the subject matter ethics studies. It consists of the standards that an individual or a group has about what is right and wrong or good and bad. That is, an individual or groups within a society have some matters and values to which they attach great importance. They have something to praise or to condemn, to value or devalue. These are what moral standards deal with. For instance, a given society may have or adopt a moral standard against lying, theft, rape, enslavement, murder, child abuse, assault, law breaking, and the like. Any given person may adopt such moral standards from different sources and influences. These influences may come from parents, associations, churches, schools, friends, mass Medias, etc.

Moreover, morality does not deal with anything empirical. Morality is concerned with what ought to be whereas empirical concerns what is. "Generally speaking," says Velasquez, "moral standards deal with matters to which we attach great values."⁴

1.1.2. Ethics

We stated that morality is a subject matter of ethics, i.e. ethics studies morality. This may also mean that ethics is a science of morality. It begins when a person reflects on her moral standards or the standards of her society and asks whether these standards are reasonable or unreasonable.

... a person starts to do ethics when she takes the moral standards that she's absorbed from her family, her church, her society- and asks questions: Do these standards really make sense? What are the reasons for or against these standards? Why should I continue to believe in them? What can be said in their favor, and what can be said against them? Are they really reasonable for me to hold?

³ Ibid., 276.

⁴ M. Velasquez, op. cit., 277.

Is it sometimes permissible to lie? Is some things-like people's feeling- more important than telling the truth? Why is honesty so important, anyway? What makes lying wrong? Is lying wrong because [it] injures people? What makes something right and wrong, and why are these so important?⁵

Ethics, thus, took its shape through different attempts to answer these questions.

Generally speaking, ethics refers to standard of behavior that tells us how human beings ought to or ought not to act in many different situations. The fact that humans are social beings takes into account the many situations in which we find ourselves as friends, parents, children, professionals, teachers, business people, etc. Thus, ethics tells us how people ought to or ought not to act and react in every human and even environmental relationship, whether it is horizontal or vertical relationship. Accordingly, ethics concerns itself with discovering a system one may use to determine what is good or bad, and evaluates systems that others have proposed; and it attempts to develop a system of obligations that we have toward one another.

There are three types of areas of ethics: Metaethics⁶, Applied ethics⁷, and Normative ethics. Each of them uses its own different approaches to ethics. For I am concerned with Normative theory of ethics, I do not discuss the other theories in this thesis.

Normative ethics deals with questions of how one ought to live, or what things are good to do and wrong to avoid. It is the attempt to provide a general theory that tells us how we ought to live. "Normative ethics is much closer to home, to those decisions we make every day about our behavior and that of others."⁸

To harmonize and moralize humans' interrelationship, I think, is normative ethics' main attempt. Under the field of normative ethics, many ethical questions, questions about human interactions, can be raised. The following are some of the questions that can be asked by normative ethics.

⁵ Ibid., 277.

⁶ Metaethics is the study of the meaning and function of ethical predicates and principles. It analyzes ethical questions with a view to establishing the prospects for the creation of a science of value.

⁷ Applied ethics is an attempt to apply different ethical theories to humans' daily life. It is the most down to earth branch of ethics.

⁸ Bryan Greetham, *Philosophy* (Norwich: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 300.

What behavior (or intentions) are good or bad? What kind of things can be adduced as moral justification (“justifying reasons”) for certain kinds of behavior? Is killing another human being (murder) morally acceptable? Killing an enemy in war? Ethnic cleansing? Killing a person in self-defense? Executing a convicted murderer? Assisting a terminally ill person to die? Killing yourself? Abortion of a deformed fetus? Killing of an animal? Is torture ever justified? Theft? Lying? Promise-breaking? What is the best way for humans to lead their lives? What are the justifying reasons for war? Is there such a thing as “just war”? Do animals have rights? Do women? Children? Mentally handicapped people?⁹

Many philosophers in the past had asked such questions and many had tried to answer them. But they could not reach on a sharp and a single answer that they all agreed upon. They set no universal standard, but rather left it open for further discourse. This does not mean that their effort did not produce any positive outcomes. At least their attempts have clarified the implications of certain very general beliefs about morality, and have shown how these beliefs can consistently be put into practice. These attempts have made individuals critical about what they have adopted from anyone else.

However, the philosophers’ attempts to answer such questions differ from one another in many respects. While answering such ethical questions, some philosophers focused on the agent or the person performing a given act; some on the act itself; and others on the consequences of the act. As a result, normative ethics is broken down to three: Virtue ethics¹⁰, Deontology and Consequentialism.¹¹ The following part of this chapter is devoted to the discussion of Consequentialism and Deontological theory of ethics.

1.2. Teleology / Consequentialism

Many ethicists have tried to set up the standard of morality. They wanted to form the moral basis for our actions, or to tell what things are moral to do and what things are immoral. They thought

⁹ Internet Encyclopedia of philosophy, *Introduction: What is ethics?*

¹⁰ Virtue ethics is an approach that Aristotle made the cornerstone of his moral philosophy. For Aristotle, virtue is the ability to be reasonable in our actions, desires, and emotions. In short, virtue is the moral ability to always seek and achieve the mean. However, Aristotle does not think virtue is innate; rather he thinks that we develop virtue by training in our community.

¹¹ Throughout this thesis I use the term *Consequentialism* and *Teleology* interchangeably, for they both have the same meaning and connotation.

that people need references to decide moral right and wrong. Consequently, this inquiry leads to the emergence of a new moral theory: Teleology.

The term teleology comes from Greek word “telos” which means *end* or *purpose* or *goal*. Thus, Teleology is simply a belief in ends and purposes or, in general, goals. Miller says: “... a teleological theory of morality stresses the consequences of actions, and even makes the consequences of action the criterion, or test, of their rightness. An action is judged right or wrong, moral or immoral, depending on what happens as a result of it.”¹² This is a theory that measures the morality of an action by its non-moral consequences. “A consequentialist argues that the only thing we must know for an action or decision to be right is whether or not, in contrast to all alternatives, it will produce the greatest balance of good over bad.”¹³ The consequentialists consider the ratio of good to evil that an action produces. “The right action”, as Manuel Velasquez states, “is the one that produces or will probably produce as great a ratio of good to evil as any other action. The wrong action is the one that does not.”¹⁴ It is to say that we are obliged only to do an act which 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 to help him.

“Consequentialism is a nefariously multi-headed beast, capable of adopting quite a variety of guises.”¹⁵ As it is stated, consequentialism is simply an attempt to produce a good outcome at the expense of anything else. It is a search after the promotion of a better result. But the prominent question, here, is: Whose good is that which one is ought to promote, or seek after? Many moral thinkers have attempted to answer this question from different perspectives. Consequently, this attempt, again, led to the emergence of different versions of teleological ethics. We will discuss below two of these sub-versions of teleology, namely Hedonism and Utilitarianism.

¹²Ed. L. Miller, *Questions that Matter: An Invitation to philosophy 4e* (USA: Mc Graw - Hill Companies, 1996), 379-380.

¹³ B. Greetham, op. cit., 302.

¹⁴ M. Velasquez, op. cit., 461.

¹⁵ Internet Encyclopedia of philosophy: *Philosophy*

1.2.1. Hedonism

Hedonism comes from the Greek word ‘hedone’ means “pleasure”. It is the ethical doctrine that pleasure is the highest good, and the production of pleasure is the criterion of right action. Hedonism is sometimes called the Pleasure Principle, for its high emphasis on pleasure. It is an ethical philosophy which holds that only pleasure is worth having for its own sake. “... [H]edonists view pleasure and only pleasure as having intrinsic value.”¹⁶

Hedonism can be divided into two: Egoistic hedonism and Social hedonism. They differ on the way they answer the question ‘whose pleasure?’. Although both of them, as forms of hedonism, advocate pleasure as the good, they answer this question in quite different ways. Let us now begin with Egoistic Hedonism.

What is *egoistic hedonism*? The word “Egoism” comes from the Greek word *ego*, “I”. Literally it is equivalent with “I-ism”. “Any form of egoism thus makes the self the central concern, the beginning and end of all consideration.”¹⁷ Therefore, egoistic hedonism, sometimes ethical egoism, claims that a morally right action is one that produces more good and fewer bad consequences for oneself than any other action. The self is the central or reference point for right action because what are taken to matter more than any other result are the consequences of the act for the agent. It may give consideration to actions which are good for the agent but harmful to the general welfare. Generally speaking, egoistic hedonism or ethical egoism is the ethical doctrine that the pursuit and production of one’s own pleasure is the highest good and the criterion of right action.

1.2.2. Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism, somewhat, is the counter moral principle to egoistic hedonism. Egoistic hedonism stresses the individual agent, while utilitarianism emphasizes greatest number of people. Moreover, as Miller states “[utilitarianism] is the ethical doctrine that claims that an action is right if, and only if, it promotes the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people.”¹⁸ This

¹⁶ M. Velasquez, op. cit., 461.

¹⁷ Ed. L. Miller, op. cit., 455.

¹⁸ Ibid., 447.

implies that the standard of morality is the promotion of everyone's best interest. What matters here is the aggregate good - the good of all concerned and not the good of any particular person. Therefore, utilitarians say someone is moral when her action produces the greatest possible amount of good for the greatest number of people. Moreover, utilitarianism itself has two versions: Act utilitarianism and Rule utilitarianism.

Act Utilitarianism is an ethical principle that we should act so as to produce the greatest happiness for the most people. According to act utilitarianism, the action is right if it will produce more happiness or pleasure than any other action, and wrong if it will produce more unhappiness or pain than the alternative actions one can perform in its place. For act utilitarianism, for instance, it is morally right to sentence to death an accused, but proved innocent, person in order to protect the society from chaos which may cause more deaths. And this is how act utilitarians justify what they believe is morally right action.

Rule Utilitarianism means that we should act so that the rules governing our actions produce the greatest happiness for the most people.¹⁹ From this definition we can see that rule utilitarianism seems an attempt to reconcile deontology and teleology. Because it holds that morality involves following certain rules. Rule utilitarianism stresses the general rule that the act should follow rather than a particular act. It applies the principle of *greatest happiness* to the general rules governing our actions, but not to a particular act one may perform.

In general, consequentialism, whether it is hedonism or utilitarianism, is a *wait and see* principle. One has to wait for the end result of his action to decide whether an act is right and wrong, or moral and immoral. It emphasizes the consequences of our action as a criterion of morality. According to consequentialism, be it egoistic hedonism, social hedonism, act utilitarianism, or rule utilitarianism, whatever those acts are; the end justifies the means. This theory urges us, before acting, to ask ourselves this question: What will be the consequences of my action?

However, what would happen if we separate an act from its consequences? Is a particular act moral or immoral in itself? What about the performance of any given act? What is our duty? What are we really ought to do? To do what is good or what is right? The attempt to answer

¹⁹ M. Velasquez, op. cit., 467.

these and other questions led moral thinkers to develop a moral theory that they think will solve the problems with teleology which is called Deontology.

1.3. Deontology

We have discussed above the different versions of teleological moral theory. Now we turn our attention to a counter moral principle which claims to be non-consequentialist. “A non-consequentialist theory maintains that the morality of an action depends on factors other than consequences.”²⁰ Such kind of moral theory is what we call Deontological ethics, whose main advocate is Immanuel Kant.

The word deontology comes from the Greek “deon” which means *duty* or *obligation*. Deontological ethics is a duty-based theory, i.e. it stresses that each of us has certain duties or actions that we ought or ought not to perform. In contrast to consequentialism, acting morally amounts to doing one’s duty, whatever consequences might follow from this. “It is this idea that some actions are absolutely right or wrong regardless of the results which follow from them, which distinguishes duty-based (also known as deontological) ethical theories from consequentialist theories.”²¹ Deontological theories focus on types of actions rather than the particular consequences of those actions. Thus, deontological theories hold that certain actions are wrong simply because of the nature of that action. Consequently, a deontologist argues that we should stick to our duty, no matter the consequences. 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 morality of our actions. What matters is not the consequences but the performance.

Then, what is the criterion of right action? What makes a particular act moral or immoral? The consequences? No, says Kant. To decide whether an act is moral or not, according to Kant, the outcome or consequence of the action is absolutely irrelevant. To answer this question Kant refers to his notion of motive. For Kant the motive of the agent is far more important than the

²⁰ Ibid., 470

²¹ Nigel Warburton, *Philosophy: The Basic 4e* (London and New York: Routledge. Taylor and Francis Group(2004), 40.

action itself and its consequences. “In order to know whether or not someone is acting morally”, Kant claims, “you have to know what their intention is.”²² Since humans have multiple kinds of motives, this may also lead us to another question: What kind of motive? According to Kant, in deciding whether an act is moral or not, it is necessary to determine if it arises from a motive of inclination or duty. If the act, even though its consequence may be beneficial, results from a sense of inclination it is not moral. “To be considered moral any action must be undertaken purely from a sense of duty.”²³ In Kant’s view, if I give money to charity because I have deep feeling of compassion for the needy, then I am not moral. “For Kant, however, the only accepted motive for moral action is a sense of duty.”²⁴ While consequentialists insist that man is good if her acts have good consequences, Kant insists that a man is not good unless she has a *good will*. Kant recognizes the *will* as a key to morality. According to Kant, the will, I think, is what is behind our motive. That is, good will results in good motives and good motives in good/moral actions. In the first section of his *Fundamental Principle of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant states that nothing can possibly be conceived in the world or even out of it, which can be called good without qualification, except a *good will*. Even he jumps to the conclusion that different praised virtues and characters like intelligence, wit, courage, resolution, power, honor, wealth, health, and even happiness are equitable with vices or may turn out to be vices, *if the will behind which makes use of them is mischievous*. Thus these qualities can remain good if, and only if, the will is good.

Kant is not just against fun and games and doing what we want to do, but the point is they are not relevant to morality. They have to do with what people enjoy, not what they ought to do. Duty alone is relevant in determining if one has acted morally. “The basis of moral worth must be a good motive, and the only invariably good motive is the desire to do one’s duty.”²⁵ But what is a general rule one is to follow in his acts, and which tells him what his duty is? The answer to this question gets us to his concept of *maxim*.

²² Ibid., 43.

²³ Thomas E. Katen, *Doing Philosophy* (New Jersey: Prentice – Hall, Inc 1973), 251.

²⁴ N. Warburton, op. cit., 43.

²⁵ T. Katen, op. cit., 256.

Kant describes the intension behind any act as the maxim. “The maxim is the general principle underlying the action.”²⁶ This maxim is a general rule which one plans to follow in his actions and which tells him what his duty is. “It is subjective in that the individual chooses it for himself.”²⁷ Since this maxim is subjective, which individuals choose for themselves, it is obvious that different individuals may adopt different maxims. Doesn’t this lead to contradiction? It seems necessary to know if there is a maxim that would not breakdown; one that can be applied without any exceptions in any kind of situations. Such a rule would have no conditions attached; it would be unconditional. And one’s duty to follow this rule would also be unconditional. However, Kant called this rule, which is the basis for his system of morality and duty, the *Categorical Imperative* (CI).

Kant believes that the fundamental principle of our duties must be in the form of imperative. We can identify between two kinds of imperatives: Categorical Imperative (CI) and Hypothetical Imperative. A hypothetical imperative is conditional - it takes “if ...then...” form. It can tell us what we must do only if we desire to achieve certain consequences. But if we do not care about those consequences then it tells nothing. It is a command in a conditional form.

Categorical Imperative, on the other hand, is imperative because it is a command. More precisely, it commands us to exercise our wills in a particular way, not to perform some action or other. It is categorical in virtue of applying to us unconditionally without any reference to any ends that we might or might not have.

Moreover, CI tells us what we must do, and there are no ifs or ands about it. Since the only fundamental principle of our duties is CI, morality is not conditional. It is independent of place, time and condition. CI is absolute to everyone and binding to any situation. It allows no end to be attached to any act for its morality. Even an act ceases to be moral when an end is attached to it. Generally, CI is absolute, binding, universal, unconditional and duty-based or duty-centered principle.

²⁶ N. Warburton, op. cit., 44.

²⁷ T. E. Katen, op. cit., 257.

This CI, the basic principle of morality, unconditionally obligates us. According to Kant, it is only rational beings who are capable of conceiving universal law, and hence, moral laws absolutely bound only rational beings. Such kind of moral law must allow no exceptions. However, the point here is: What are the elements of CI? How can we adopt such moral duties? Who is legitimate to set such universally bounding moral principles? Kant's formulations of CI will answer these questions.

1.3.1. Kant's Formulations of CI

The formulation of CI has three central points: *universalizability*, *freedom of individual*, and *autonomy*. Based on these three themes one can formulate duties for herself. However, the basic principles of the CI can also be expressed in the following statement.

“Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.”²⁸ ‘Will’ here means ‘rationally want’. And this as a whole implies that one is morally wrong to do something she is not willing to have everyone do and something she does not believe everyone could do. To be morally good, therefore, one must do something she believes everyone, in any situation and without any exception, can and ought to do. Thus, for any act to be moral the underlying maxim has to be a universalizable one – one which everyone in whatever situation wills and ought to do.

“Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always and at the same time as an end.”²⁹ This second version says that we should treat people as they freely and knowingly consent to be treated, not merely as a means to our own goals. Kant says that it is wrong to force or to manipulate a person into doing something, because in manipulating or forcing a person I am failing to treat the person as he has freely and knowingly consented to be treated.³⁰

²⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Ground Work of the Metaphysics of Moral*, transl. by H. J. Paton (Harper & Row: New York), 30.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

³⁰ M. Velasquez, *op. cit.*, 299.

At last Kant distinguishes between *autonomy* and *heteronomy* depending on the question “Who should decide the moral laws for someone?” He holds that a person should decide for herself the moral laws that she would follow. Kant called this ability to decide for oneself *autonomy of the will*. Kant makes the ability to decide morality for oneself, autonomy, the heart of ethics. For the *will* is one’s ability to decide things for oneself, ethics must study the *will*. In general, according to Kant, one ought to follow a universalizable maxim that treats human as an end in herself, which she herself has decided as a moral law for herself.

CHAPTER TWO

SAFUU

2.1. What is Safuu?

Every society has language, culture, political system, religion, philosophy, morality, legal systems and others. These political system, religion, morality, etc. could be indigenous or peculiar to a given society, even though there are also times when societies share same morality or religion, or at least, some aspects of moral or religious thinking. However, moral thinking, 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 society of East Africa has its own language, indigenous political system, indigenous religion, and indigenous moral system.

The Oromo are native African ethnic group found in the empire of Ethiopia and to a smaller extent in Kenya. The Oromo makes up a significant portion of the population occupying the Horn of Africa. With a population of 30 million, they constitute the single largest ethnicity in Ethiopia and the wider Horn of Africa. This is approximately 35% of Ethiopia's population according to the 2007 census. They are the majority of the peoples living in Ethiopia. Starting from the earliest times, they all used to speak the same language- Afaan Oromoo, used to have one indigenous religion- Waaqeffannaa, one indigenous political system- Gadaa System, and abide by same moral system- Safuu.

However, the concern of the thesis, in general, and of this chapter in particular is Safuu. Safuu is at the heart of everyday lives of the Oromo. They 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... Their socio-political system, namely Gadaa system, has at its heart the principles of Safuu. The laws of the Gadaa system are derived from the basic principles of Safuu. Taking Safuu out of the scene one cannot speak of Oromo religion, political system, and social structure. Simply Safuu is at the center of whatever Oromo people do at anytime and anywhere.

However, we cannot have a full grasp of Safuu unless we are clear with what is at the heart of Safuu itself. At the center of safuu is Waaqa (God). The Oromo think that it is Waaqa who gives

safuu. Therefore, we have to first understand what and who Waaqa is, and what kind of characteristics it possesses. Safuu involves the respect for Waaqa. However, this God (Waaqa) of Oromo is not the same as the Judeo-Christian God; and the Oromo do not address their Waaqa the same way that Christians do. To understand safuu and its implications, one has to know the idea of God in Oromo's view; how they think of their God (Waaqa), the motive behind their respect of safuu, and to whom they think they are accountable while performing their duty. It is after that that one really grasps the meaning and role of safuu in everyday lives of the Oromo people. The following subtopic will do the explanation about Waaqa or God of Oromo.

2.1.1. Waaqa

In Oromo society the word Waaqa has two meanings. One is the vault of the sky as we see it, and the other approximates what the English word *God* connotes. God, in English language, is “the creator and ruler of the universe- the Supreme Being.”³¹ However, Waaqa in 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. Hence the word ‘divinity’ will often be a better translation than ‘God’”³² Accordingly, Waaqa is the sole creator of the cosmos and the 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 them. Furthermore, Waaqa is seen as the source of all life; and the act of giving life, in fact, is reserved to Him alone.³³ The Oromo do not think Waaqa created only human being. In some religion it is believed that God *made* man and *created* other beings. But the Oromo think Waaqa created just all things.

Waaqa creates everything through *ayyaana*. According to Gemetchu Megersa, *ayyaana* refers to that by which and through which Waaqa, God, creates everything. He further explains that *ayyaana* is in fact both that which causes something to come into being and that which becomes

³¹ Concise Oxford English Dictionary

³² Lambert Bartels, *OROMO RELIGION: Myth and Rites of the Western Oromo of Ethiopia- an Attempt to Understand*, (Berlin: Reimer, 1983), 89.

³³ *Ibid.*, 91.

what it has caused.³⁴ In short, “Ayyaana, for the Oromo, is the creative act of thinking in which a thought becomes that which it mentally represents.”³⁵ As it is Waaqa’s exceptional act to give life, wherever there is life there is Waaqa. Waaqa is everywhere where there is life. “The presence of life means the presence of [Waaqa]. Whenever you say ‘There is no life’, you say: ‘[Waaqa] is not there’.”³⁶ Likewise, 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. We can understand this thinking from the Oromos of Metcha. Asafa Disasa once said: “Ganamaan ba’aniif Waaqa jalaa hin ba’ani,” meaning that *man may set out early in the morning but he never will escape from Waaqa.*³⁷ No matter how early one sets out or how fast one can run, drive or fly no one will ever escape from the eyes of Waaqa. They refrain not only from doing something bad but also from even thinking evil thoughts, for they think Waaqa can see what they think in their heart. 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, the Oromo think, is the giver of Safuu. As it is mentioned earlier, Waaqa is the creator of Safuu. He is the giver and protector of Safuu. It is Waaqa who looks after Safuu. Waaqa rewards those who respect and protect safuu and withdraws from those who do not. The idea of Waaqa’s withdrawal needs further explanation.

In Judeo-Christian thought God punishes, directly, those who do not live according to his word. But in the Oromo’s view Waaqa (God) 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 withdrawal of Waaqa. The Oromo believe that when Waaqa withdraws life diminishes in all of its forms. There will no longer be fertility, peace, good

³⁴ Gemetchu Megerssa, “The Oromo Worldview”, *Interdisciplinary Seminar of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies* 1 (June 6-7, 1998), 41.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁶ L. Bartels, *op. cit.*, 97.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 98.

health, material well-being and so on. "... [A]s a result of [Waaqa's] withdrawal," explains Bartels, "man is left victim to minor evil powers. It is these minor powers, rather than [Waaqa] himself that strike man with misfortune: for example, sickness or madness."³⁸ The extra motivation for respecting safuu, as one can understand from the idea of Waaqa's withdrawal, is not fear of the punishments Waaqa might inflict. Rather it is a respect of Waaqa and one's desire to get Waaqa's blessing. Waaqa keeps out of the ways of the evils (those who do not respect safuu), and He consorts with those who do respect safuu. Respecting the Waaqa-given Safuu, hence, is respecting Waaqa. Now since we have clearly seen what is at the heart of safuu and who is the source and protector of safuu, we can turn to the detailed discussion about safuu.

Safuu is not a concept that can be defined using just a word or a statement. The Oromos use of the word in their daily life makes it too difficult to do so. Mirressa Gamtesa is quoted by Bartels saying the following about the conception of Safuu in Maccaa Oromoo³⁹. "[Safuu] stands for everything that we do not understand, including a person's evil deed..."⁴⁰ The other speaker, Asafa Disasa, says: "Having [safuu] means that you know how to behave according to the laws of our ancestors..."⁴¹ 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 Waqa knows.'"⁴²

From the above quotes we can understand that safuu is a multifunctional concept. Sometimes it is said of behavior; sometimes of the majesty of Waqa (God); and sometimes of the things beyond one's understanding. However, it is most commonly conceived, amongst the Oromo as a whole, as a principle of deep moral honor and accountability based on respect for Waqa (God).

³⁸ Ibid., 104.

³⁹ Maccaa Oromo is a group of Oromo people inhabiting the Western part of Oromiya.

⁴⁰ L. Bartels, op. cit., 331.

⁴¹ Ibid., 331.

⁴² Ibid., 332.

For the purpose of this thesis, I use Safuu 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 I am going to use “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 thesis. For example: i) John is moral = John respects/knows safuu. ii) It is immoral to kill = It is safuu to kill. iii) Telling the truth is moral = Telling the truth is respecting/upholding safuu. If one says *there is safuu* between people and/or things, it does not mean there is *immorality* between them. It is to say that *there is an ethical relationship* between them. Moreover, safuu is the concept all Oromo share regardless of where they live.

Safuu is not the law of man. Human laws cannot be considered as safuu. 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 [Waaqa’s] will that [safuu] exists.... [Safuu] is something from [Waaqa] and the earth.”⁴³ Thus Waaqa (God) wills safuu to exist, not man or any other creature. Man only finds out and abides by it. Oromo people have laws, but they never see these laws and safuu as equivalent. The two, according to the Oromo people, are totally different. The following words of Shagerdi Bukko clearly points out the difference between laws of man and Safuu:

The law of Makko Billi⁴⁴ was a good law; so it was that people accepted it. The [safuu] comes from [Waaqa] and the earth. We never say: ‘[safuu] comes from Makko Billi’; we always say: ‘[Safuu] comes from [Waaqa].’ Nor do we ever speak of the *law of [safuu]*; we speak of the law of Makko Billi.⁴⁵

However, the Oromo 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 think Waaqa created everything with boundaries between and within each of them. Each one of them is given a place of their own and lives according to their own ayyaana. All of

⁴³Ibid., 333.

⁴⁴ In Macca oral tradition Makko Billi is a person whose appearance coincides with their birth as a distinct Oromo tribe, when they emerged from the water of the Ghibe river. It was at this moment that Makko Billi proclaimed his law.

⁴⁵ L. Bartels, op. cit., 335.

them are different from each other, and unique. Each of them has to keep the distance⁴⁶ 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 Waaqa put between them. 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. Breaking safuu results in a cosmic-disorder.

“[Safuu] means paying respect.”⁴⁷ It is paying respect to everyone and/or everything. It is paying respect to all that Waaqa has created, and the way He created. The Oromo pay respect to one another: the younger to the elder, and children to their parents and vice versa. It is worth noting that this kind of respect is a two-way respect. Father and mother respect their children as children do and the same holds true for elder and younger siblings. There is safuu between parents and children, and between older and younger brothers and sisters. Likewise, the Oromo respect all nature. They pay respect to everything Waaqa created. They think there is a boundary between man and nature, and consequently, they always try to not overstep the boundary. Every creature lives just the way it is created to live or, in other words, 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 world-order. There is this 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 try to change the lifestyle of any member even if changing it best serves human interest. There is safuu between man and animals, and between man and plants. For instance, the Oromo do not kill any animal only because the animals eat their crop. “[They] prefer to keep watch on their crops day and night at considerable pains to

⁴⁶ Here, and throughout the thesis, distance should be understood metaphorically, not literally. It is not the actual physical amount of space between two things. Distance in the context of safuu has to be understood as the moral relationship between all things, respect, care and concern for all things.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 333.

themselves rather than exterminating the pests systematically.”⁴⁸ They do not even insult or curse them. It is safuu to do so. There is safuu between man and animal.⁴⁹

Safuu is not in anybody/anything. It is between everyone and everything. Waaqa has already put safuu out there. 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. But it has to be noted that the Oromo give emphasis not only to the understanding of safuu, but also to its exhibition. A wisdom that is not practicalized is not worth having. Therefore, a wise man is a person who understands safuu and exhibits it. “A wise man”, Gemetchu Megersa states, “is not a man who merely knows; it is rather a man who lives his knowledge.”⁵⁰ 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. In the Oromo society doing the right thing is equivalent with knowing safuu.

Waaqa, being the source and the sole giver of safuu, even is not beyond safuu. There is safuu for Waaqa himself. There is an expectation and assumption that people have about the nature of Waaqa, and it is safuu for Waaqa to not live up to the assumptions and expectation of people. Waaqa has to live like Waaqa, not like man. He has to be patient, merciful, generous, etc. If Waaqa fails to exhibit the Waaqa-like characteristics, if He does not respect safuu, the people stand up against Him and ask Him to be more like Waaqa. This keeps the balance between creator and creature. Accordingly, for the Oromo, having absolute control over his creations, 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. In the Oromo context, Waaqa has to be bound by the safuu He has given the people. Like 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. Note that safuu is not in anything; it is between everything. One of the informants of Bartels, while explaining about safuu between him and his children, says: “... [safuu] is not something in [the

⁴⁸ Ibid., 343.

⁴⁹ This issue will be discussed in more detail later when I discuss *safuu and animal rights*.

⁵⁰ G. Megerssa, op. cit., 43.

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.”⁵¹ 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 freewill is an essence of morality. If we are forced to make some decisions, we would not be considered as moral even if the decision we made is a moral decision, for we are forced and we did not make the decision on our freewill. When one looks at safuu and Waaqa, it may seem to be like 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 (God) is involved in our moral decision making.

Moreover, abiding by safuu is not like following the word of God willingly or unwillingly. God of the Oromo does not give specific commandments like, for example: You shall not kill; You shall not commit adultery; You shall tell the truth; etc. These kinds of duties are what 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. 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 decision's consequence to yourself. Making such a decision totally depends on the agent. There is no any external body that forces one during moral decision-making. The God of the Oromo does not force any moral choice and does not punish anybody for not acting morally. He only rewards those who uphold safuu, and withdraws from those who are evils, for His nature, particularly holiness, makes it impossible for God to be in the lives of the evils.

⁵¹L. Bartels, *op. cit.*, 333.

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 the 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 that the member of the system remains healthy. Man is absolutely free in choosing specific course of action and way of life. However, what one chooses must be something that conforms to the general principle of cosmic-system. Here one might ask such a choice is not a choice based on one's own reason and freewill, since there is already a principle to which our choice has to conform. But I think 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. 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, I think, is to use one's own reason and freewill for self-destruction.

CHAPTER THREE

CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

3.1. The Moral Problem of Absolute Consequentialism

Ethics is one of the important things in human life and interactions. This is so because human beings are social beings. Being a social being may be willingly or unwillingly imposed on man by environmental and personal facts. No human can escape being such a being. The fact that we are social beings takes into account the different situations in which we find ourselves as friends, parents, children, citizens, professionals, and etc. This implies that we are interdependent and that we have many things in common. One's action, directly or indirectly, affects others. Wherever you are, there is still someone to be affected, positively or negatively, by your choice and action.

On this planet no one is left alone. In other words, everyone is bound together socially, economically, and politically. 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. This earth and its resources, for instance, is our common property. All men are equally legitimate to benefit from and to make use of it. This being the case, still no one is self-sufficient even to make use of it. There is still 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. We cannot cast this conflict off human relations. In the course of human history, there has been struggle between selfish interest and common interest. Man puts himself first towards some benefits and last against some harm. Hobbes argues that all people are egoists who always act in their own self interest, to obtain gratification and avoid harm.⁵² Every man acts putting herself at the center, striving for her own interest and benefit. 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 man is against her single benefit, or just because their interest towards something coincides. This is because of the fact that human beings are selfish, egoistic and self-

⁵² Louis P. Pojman, *Philosophical Traditions: A Text with Readings* (USA:Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1998), 489.

centered. Especially, in our modern world this 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 (selfishness, egoism and self-centeredness) and the mode of human existence (social-beingness) 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, whatever consequences might follow from this. This section of the thesis, however, shows the moral and social problems of "*absolute* consequentialism". Here the adjective *absolute* should be understood as *anything taken to its extreme form*.

In chapter one of this thesis it was stated that consequentialism is an ethical theory that evaluates the morality of an action by its consequences. This, as we have seen in the foregoing chapter, 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 that the act is. That is, whatever the specific act is, the end justifies the means. Is such moral theory safely applicable to egoistic and self-centered human being without causing any further problem? I say "No". I will briefly discuss why; and present my general critique against consequentialism below.

Teleology, in general, is unable to adequately explain why morally wrong action is wrong and why morally right one is right. In my view the question "why?" does not relate to consequences; it asks about the essence or intention of the act. The consequences of a particular action can never remain the same all the time and everywhere. That is to say, time, place and condition determine the outcome. Even within the same context the goodness and badness of the consequences of that particular act varies from person to person. Hence, depending only on its result to explain 'why' an action is morally good or bad is groundless. The problem is not only this. It is also the case that the selfish act of someone may produce a consequence which is good for the agent and not good or even harmful to others. This is so because consequentialism persuades human beings, who are both selfish and social, to seek good consequences of one's act for herself alone. No one is concerned about the morality of the act, but only about the

consequences of the act. The consequences may be good or bad. Even if it is good, its goodness might only be for the agent.

Consequentialism does not give any guidance. It 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. It does not tell you whether or not a specific act is moral beforehand. One has to wait for its consequence to decide the morality of an act. It is a kind of a *wait and see* principle. This in turn makes a society unable to make moral decision before engaging into action. Then each and every action, whatever it might be, is open to be performed. One who is persuaded by consequentialism may engage in robbery, stealing, and adultery since its morality or immorality depends on the consequences that result after the act is already performed. Then what kind of guidance may such theory provide a society with? Nothing, but instead causes social uncertainty about how they would behave, for it does not tell the morality of any action beforehand.

Even if the consequentialist assumption that 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. Everyone acts with some intentions, about the result of her act, in her mind. The problem arises when the agent’s 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 problem is harmful not only to the society, but also to the agent herself. As a result, humans become position-less or 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.”⁵³

It is not always right to decide the morality of an act based on an immediate pleasure or goodness of the act. Because a little pleasure of today might turn out to be an enduring pain. What is 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? This is a question consequentialism is unable to answer.

⁵³ Ed. L. Miller, op. cit., 411.

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. It is also difficult to measure and compare different pleasures. For instance, how could we compare the pleasure a football fan gets from watching his team scoring a great goal with a 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. Who is to decide whether or not the great pleasure experienced by a sadist outweighs the victim’s suffering?”⁵⁴ Two, the calculation of consequences before making moral decisions results in time delay. The time delay results from the calculation will cause further moral problems. Sometimes it is possible that the bad consequences which result from this time delay may outweigh the good consequences of making perfect decision. Moreover, it seems illogical to me that, in consequentialism, we have to depend upon the nonmoral consequences of an act to decide whether or not the act is moral.

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, and no mutual trust but distrust in a given society, every member of that society would always be ready to attack, for she is afraid of being attacked. This may take us back into what Hobbes calls *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 her. She prefers to act immorally in order to protect herself against the selfish act of others which she thinks might be immoral and harmful to her. Hence, morality lacks essence, and even ceases to exist.

⁵⁴ Nigel Warburton, *Philosophy: The Basic 4e* (London and New York: Routledge.Taylor and Francis Group, 2004), 49.

However, it has to be clear that I am not against consequences as a whole. To aim towards something-having goal and purpose in life is what distinguishes human beings from other beings. What always guides humans is a rational purpose/goal. Every man has an end for all of her choices and acts. To put it differently, man's life is goal-oriented; and we cannot separate goal or end from humanity. An aimless or goalless life and acts are boring and meaningless. What is the essence of an act that is done without any rational purpose or end? What kind of life would it be if it is directed towards nothing? Is it meaningful? No, not at all. So what is wrong with consequentialism? The point, however, is that it should not be the *sole* criterion of morality even though it should be given moral consideration.

3.2. The Impossibility of Pure Deontology

Deontology is a moral principle formulated in response to the short-comings of teleology. As it was said in the previous chapter, it stresses neither 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 urges human beings to absolutely deny or ignore the outcome of their acts, and stress only on the act at hand. 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 moral principle really applicable? Is pure deontology possible? Is Kant's Categorical Imperative (CI) really deontological? Doesn't it have a teleological implication or interpretation? Is there such a thing as human being without aim or goal in life? Is pure deontology compatible with human nature?

Let us start with the general criticism against *deontology as it is*. That is, even if we assume that deontology is a right moral principle, it has some general weaknesses and immoral implications. To begin with, Kant's deontological moral system is anthropocentric. It neglects the value of nature since the system treats only human beings as ends in themselves. It 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]."⁵⁵ This implies that other issues carry no moral weight in moral decision-making. If so, what about animal rights and environmental issues that are parts and parcel of human life and human decision-making? Then

⁵⁵ E. D. Miller, op. cit., 429.

there follows the abuse of nature, for the system gives no moral consideration and moral space to nature and its constituents.

For deontologists, every wrong doings (violations of CI) are all equal. This, however, makes the application of punishment difficult because there are no degrees of wrongness. But in reality the bad consequences of every wrong doings are not the same. For instance, according to deontology, a person who lied to his parents in order to get some more money and a person who killed his parent are both equally wrong and would equally be punished, if there is any kind of punishment. But in reality, it should be the greater the wrong, the severer the punishment would be.

The other problem with Kant's moral theory arises when duties conflict. "Kant regards all duties as absolute, and he doesn't foresee the possibility that they may come into conflict with one another and we will have to choose between them."⁵⁶ Kant's theory does not tell us what to do when there is a conflict of duties. 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; i.e. 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 critiques are not all there is to show. But they are the critiques that are presented by assuming that *deontology as it is* is possible. They are the weak spots of deontology that could be found on the assumption that deontology is possible. However, there is still more to say not of its weaknesses but of its impossibility in a *pure sense*; and of teleological interpretation and implication of Kant himself and his CI.

Is *pure deontology* possible? To answer this question we have to first assess humanity and human nature, since the direct agent of morality is human being. In the previous discussion it has

⁵⁶ Bryan Greetham, *Philosophy* (Norwich: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 306.

been shown that human beings are selfish, egoistic, and self-centered creatures that necessarily have to exist socially. Secondly, as it was stated earlier, every human being is goal-oriented and purposeful. There is no human being goalless and no human action 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....”⁵⁷ Being purposeful, having a rational goal and end to achieve, I think, is one of the defining characteristics of human beings. Every man acts with the consequences of his act 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, it can also be said of its impossibility in its pure sense. In the first place, why do humans need the concept 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 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?

As I understand, 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 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 did not prefer. If we prefer deontology over other moral theories, that is because of its good consequence that satisfies our needs. Basically, why does Kant reject consequentialism? Is it not because of its negative consequences on human society? Yes, it is. And why does he adopt deontology? Is it not because of its positive impacts on humanity and human life? Yes, it is. If not, what good reason is there for rejecting consequentialism and adopting deontology? Is it not because consequentialism has some problems that deontology is able to correct? Exactly, yes.

⁵⁷ Steven M. Cahn, *Philosophy for the 21st Century: A Comprehensive Reader* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2003), 610.

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

Kant urges human to follow their duty. But he does not give sufficient response to the question: Why do we take any duty as our duty? He simply says because it is your duty. This is arguing in circle, and hence does not answer the question *why*. But there is still a purpose to be achieved by performing one's duty. The duty itself has its own consequences. For instance, we can see Kant's notion of *Good will*. For Kant man is good if he has a good will. He concludes that different praised virtues like courage, wit, health, wealth, resolution, power, etc. are equitable with vices or may turn out to be vices if the *will* which makes use of them is not *good*. We can understand from this that it is a *good will* which is the basis for Kant's CI, and this is so because of its good effects. Then where is pure deontology? Pure deontology can only be possible if one can separate man from her nature, i.e. if one can make humans and human life become aimless, goalless, and purposeless, which, I think, is impossible.

Now let us proceed to what Kant calls fundamental principle of our moral duties: *Categorical Imperative, CI*. CI unconditionally commands and obligates us to exercise our wills in a particular way without any exceptions. The point, however, is not CI, but its formulations. I want to show that Kant's formulation of CI has 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 become a universal law*. It is to say do whatever duty that can be universalized—that anyone can and ought to do. This, in turn, is just to say do not do to others whatever is painful to you. Here Kant hides *the golden rule*, which is not *categorically imperative* and rather *hypothetically imperative*, within this formulation of CI. In Kant's view, what would happen if one tries to or already universalized stealing one's property? Simply, 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 universalized 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 a particular act to be universalized by performing the act. If they think the act they are about to engage in produces a bad consequence to themselves when universalized, then they refrain from

performing the action. 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. Because he urges man to do what can be universalized without any contradiction. What can be universalized without any contradiction must be what is useful to everyone, and what everyone wants. Such 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, let it be their promise to me or to anybody else. Breaking my promise entails that I am willing to universalize promise-breaking. 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 not keeping my promise only because keeping promise is my duty, but I am also considering the consequence of universalizing keeping and/or breaking promise. If I universalize promise keeping everyone else is going to keep his/her promise to me; and if I let breaking promise be universalized none of my promisor is going to keep his/her promise to me. 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 deontological.

Some criticize this notion of universalizability in Kant's ethical theory as being empty. "... His theory only gives a framework showing the structure of moral judgments without giving any help to those faced with making actual moral decisions."⁵⁸ In fact the version of CI which says treat every human as ends in themselves and never merely as a means gives some content to his morality. However, the universalizability concept has a little to do in helping people trying to decide what they ought to do in front of actual moral problems.

Generally, because of its incompatibility with human nature, and that CI itself implies a teleological interpretation, we cannot find *pure deontology*. We cannot separate end from human nature, and also from CI itself-and hence it is contradictory to speak of deontology. Even Kant

⁵⁸ Nigel Warburton, *Philosophy: The Basic 4e* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group 2004),

himself has an end to achieve by formulating his deontological moral system: an end to give a right ground for morality which could be achieved by his CI.

So far we have seen the meaning of ethics and its branches-normative, metaethics and applied ethics. Under normative ethics we have seen two major theories of ethics namely Consequentialism and Deontology. These two schools of thought have been discussed in detail in chapter one; and the first part of this chapter has discussed their shortcomings. Deontology and consequentialism are qualified under this chapter by adding adjectives *pure* and *absolute* respectively. The gap in *pure deontology* and *absolute consequentialism* was clearly shown under this chapter. It has been proven that *absolute consequentialism* results in further moral problems; and that *pure deontology* is impossible because of its incompatibility with human nature and because deontology itself has a teleological root. Now since there is a gap in both theories, there arises a need for another morality that could fill the gaps. There has to be a moral thought that can correct the problems with both consequentialism and deontology. That is, there should be a moral principle which does not result in further moral problems, as it is with consequentialism, and which can be applied to and/or by human beings without contradicting with human nature, as it is with deontology; and a moral principle which is compatible with human nature. Then, what is that morality that can correct or fill the gap in consequentialism and deontology? Under the following subtopic, we will see the comparative analysis of Safuu and Deontology and Consequentialism; and I will show how Safuu fills the gap in both Deontology and Consequentialism.

3.3. 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. 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. 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*, but not because lying serves person X's purpose. After all the Oromo are against killing in general, let alone killing a human being. They would do anything, except things that involve

any kind of taking life away, in order to make killing not occur. According to the Oromo, it is safuu to take away a life, of anything, that Waaqa gives. It is safuu to take away a life that one did not give.

The principles of safuu are not merely based on pleasure. It is not formulated in order to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. If something is safuu, or if it is against safuu you do not engage in that thing regardless of its pain or pleasure for you. However, this does not mean safuu does not allow exceptions. Indeed it does. As it was put above, breaking safuu is allowed only in order to prevent some more breach of safuu such as killing. Safuu is based on paying respect to nature and keeping the distance between everything rather than the pleasure one gets from an act. The Oromo think nature is better off if left the way Waaqa created it. It is perfect just the way it is. They think they have to make use of it without altering the way it functions. Man must conform to the cosmic and social order that is already there, not the other way round. If man fails to do that, then she acts against safuu.

Safuu, basically, 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*. Safuu 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 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 man. It is more the responsibility of man to maintain the cosmic order than it is of the other beings. 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 in a teleological element.

Though safuu embraces a teleological element in itself, but it is wrong to consider it as an 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.

The Oromo do not have in mind the wellbeing of human being alone while acting. They rather have in mind the general well being of all the constituents of the cosmos-including living and nonliving beings. Every member of the cosmos matters alike to the Oromo. It is a holistic morality. The wellbeing of other creatures holds as much weight as the wellbeing of humans do. Here it is worth noting the Oromo view of nature and man. For the Oromo, 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 independently 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 the specific action is considered with regard to every member of the cosmos; not only with regards to human beings. The consequences of the act to everything have to be considered.

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 is the center of 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.*

Deontological morality, on the other hand, urges everyone to perform one's duty without considering the consequences of the action. The time any end is attached to a particular action, it

ceases to be moral. In deontological morality, as it has been stated in the first part of this chapter, 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 into the action. Animals and plants hold high moral weight, as an object of morality, in safuu. 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 *moral agent*.⁵⁹ Only human is capable of being moral, and has the responsibility to act morally. Other beings are just *moral patients*.⁶⁰ They have a moral stand since they are endowed with an intrinsic value, but they do not have moral responsibility. They are objects of moral responsibilities, according to safuu. Safuu commands humans that moral attitudes such as moral concern, respect, value and care ought to be directed to every non-human member of the cosmos.

The moral concern and moral respect paid to animals and plants, in the Oromo society, is done regardless of the benefits they drive from them. Like any other society the Oromo use animals and plants as a means of survival or for luxury. But they still attach same moral values to the animals they use, for instance cattle, and to the animals they use for nothing like chimps. The problem of anthropocentrism we see in Western morality is not a problem in safuu. Because, according to safuu, everything has an intrinsic value, and there is safuu for everything. Generally, for the Oromo, it is not human who is the most important entity in the world. It is rather the general cosmos and its healthy functioning that should be considered as the most important. Therefore, any action is judged on the ground of the general wellbeing of the cosmos, not of human being alone. This issue will also be raised in detail later when safuu and environmental ethics will be discussed.

⁵⁹ Moral agent is an entity that has abstract conceptual ability to apply moral principles during decision making, and hence held accountable for acts.

⁶⁰ Moral patient is that which lacks the conceptual capabilities to formulate and/or follow moral principles and rules. Moral patients cannot be held responsible for any wrong they do, would not be praised for the good things they do. However, they are objects of moral, for they can feel pain and pleasure. Moral agents are responsible for moral patients.

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, 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 the 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 I argued above, contradicts with goal-oriented human nature. This makes application of deontology unlikely. In contrast, safuu is free of such problem. 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 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 blessing from Waaqa. This puts in extra-motivation for the individual to be moral.

3.4. Safuu and Some Modern Human Problems

3.4.1. Safuu and Environmental Problem

It has been shown in the foregoing discussion what safuu means and how it links up the Oromo moral worldview. The relationship between creator and creation, and the relationship amongst the creatures was also briefly discussed. We have seen that there is safuu for everything- human and nonhuman beings. There is safuu for human (*Safuu namaa*), safuu for nature (*Safuu uumamaa*), safuu for creator (*Safuu uumaa/Waaqaa*), etc. It is this Waaqa-given safuu that governs the Oromo world, and especially the relation between human beings and the environment. As indicated previously, in the Oromo universe, Waaqa made everything to have moral standing. But only human being is considered to be moral agent by virtue of its rational and linguistic capacity.

It is clear that safuu is an ethico-religious concept, for it has Waaqa (God) at the center. The Oromo at large, for that matter, are theist. Their life is highly connected to and based on their religion, *Waaqeffannaa*, and their God, *Waaqa*. Oromo morality is directly connected to their theistic belief. Hence, before I directly proceed to the discussion of Oromo indigenous

environmental ethics, it is better to show how Oromo society and individuals view nature- its living and nonliving contents. Oromo society believes nature to be a bridge between their creator, *Waaqa*, and themselves. Thus, they have a great respect for nature as a whole. We can understand this by simply looking at the way they pray and give thanks to their *Waaqa*. Ancient Oromo people do not build a church or chapel for the purpose of prayers or thanksgiving. They rather gather under a green tree, most of the time they use *Odaa*, or they gather on the side of a river. They think that nature as a whole is a gift of God to them and that they should handle it with great care. They have this belief that all life belongs to *Waaqa* and that man is not free to dispose of it *as he wishes*. That is, man has to show ethical manner toward nature and its constituents. Man has to uphold and respect the *safuu* that *Waaqa* gave for the goodness of humans, animals and nature as a whole.

Here it is important to recall the discussion about *ayyaana* in the first part of this chapter. *Ayyaana* is both that which causes something to come into being and that which becomes what it has caused. Everything has its own *ayyaana*, and hence should live according to its own *ayyaana* while, at the same time, respecting others' *ayyaana*.

[*Safuu*] implies that all things have a place of their own in the cosmic and social order, and that they should keep this place. Their place is conditioned by the specific [*ayyaana*] each of them has received from [*Waaqa*]. Every creature, and especially man, has to act according to its own [*ayyaana*] and to respect others' [*ayyaana*].⁶¹

It is this thinking, together with respect for life that *Waaqa* has given, that underlies the principles that make up *safuu*'s aspect of environmental ethics. Every creature lives as its *ayyaana* makes it live. It is a responsibility, especially for man, to live in accordance with its own *ayyaana*, and to respect others' *ayyaana*. To live contrary to one's *ayyaana* and/or not let others live according to their *ayyaana* is a sin. It is *safuu*; it is immoral. *Waaqa* does not like to see a person who does not live according to her own *ayyaana*, and also one that does not let others to live according to their *ayyaana*. Humans do what their *ayyaana* lets them to do, and so do animals. The place they live, the way they live, what they eat and where they eat is conditioned by the specific *ayyaana* of each creature.

⁶¹ L. Bartels, *op. cit.*, 170.

Here the concept of ayyaana has to be understood in a very general way. Ayyaana is that which causes things to become into existence and that which becomes what it has caused. When we say man lives according to its ayyaana, it does not mean it is ayyaana that forces every specific moral decision-making of man. For instance, if a man engages in stealing, we cannot say it is his/her ayyaana that makes him/her steal and hence should not be held morally responsible, for he/she is only acting according to his/her ayyaana. That is not how ayyaana works. Ayyaana is very general. In this case we can say it is the ayyaana of man, in general, that makes man rational and moral being. It is man's ayyaana to be conscious, rational and moral being. In short, it is man's ayyaana to be able to make rational decisions and be a moral agent. Moral decisions like committing adultery, stealing, telling the truth, helping the poor, etc. are independently made by the agent. Ayyaana has nothing to do with the specific moral decisions we make, but with the general ability to make moral decisions. Ayyana does not make choice for man; it only makes man *able* to make decisions. For example, your ayyaana makes you *able* to use and learn language, but what language you prefer to use and learn, from the other available languages, is your independent choice. Moreover, like humans, animals also exist only according to their ayyaana. They are what their ayyaana makes them to be, and act only accordingly.

This kind of belief results in two things: not taking away life of any animal and not denying a means of survival from any creature either. The Oromo believe that it is safuu (immoral) to take away a life that Waaqa (God) gives-including a life of lower creatures. The following is an advice an old man of the Oromo told adults: "My sons, when you leave your old house because you have built a new one, don't set fire to it. There are many little creatures in that old house. It is not good to kill all that life."⁶² This view is by itself absolutely non-consequential, i.e. they refrain from killing those lives not because they are useful to the people but because they are creatures of intrinsic value. It is out of the respect for safuu that Waaqa has given which, if they fail to dispose, Waaqa turns his face away from them.

It is safuu to kill any kind of animal for any purpose. But they, the Oromo, make this claim with exceptions. They think that there are some animals that Waaqa blesses for them to kill for some special purposes. This killing of particular animals for some especial purposes itself is made with

⁶²Ibid., 92.

some special rules. They do not just kill any animal in any way they want. Most of the time the killing takes place for ritual purposes and it is done with special care. Domestic animals like cattle, sheep, goat and hen, they think, are blessed for them to kill by Waaqa. However, they have a feeling that they should keep their hands off all other animals.⁶³ These domestic animals that are blessed for killing themselves cannot just be killed without qualifications.

However, it is very difficult to look at the details of Oromos' ethics towards all wild and domestic animals. Hence it would be better if general comment is made on the practice of hunting animals and eating their meat. The Oromo used to practice hunting for political and social matters. For this too, there is ethics which they call *Safuu adamoo* (ethics of hunting). During hunting one should not kill any kind of animal while it is eating, drinking and mating. It is unethical or it is violating safuu. It is also safuu to kill a young animal that is likely to produce offspring in the future. Particularly a hunter should not kill female animals. One can only kill an animal that would be of less importance, old and non-productive. This, generally speaking, shows that hunting in Oromo culture is discriminatory. Their use of domestic animals for their food is also discriminatory. They do not just kill anyone of them and eat their meat. According to the practice of this people, one should not kill young and female goats, sheep or cow, for it is safuu to kill a young animal that is still capable of procreation. This is so not because it is, by itself, to the advantage of the people but because it is just safuu. If the advantage of the people alone is considered, they would kill such animals since it is a meat of young animals that is more tasty and delicious than the old ones. But killing young animals is safuu and they refrain from doing that regardless of their knowledge of which meat is more delightful to eat.

Domestic animals are always treated in special way among the Oromo society. They sing songs for their cattle and horses. They treat them with great respect and care. Even a little cat, to which they attribute no great use, will be treated with care. For instance, cats stay around when a woman milks her cow in the morning and/or evening expecting they would be given some. "No Oromo woman takes milk inside without giving cats some after milking."⁶⁴ In other words, according to the Oromo society, it is safuu to take milk inside without giving some for the cats

⁶³Ibid., 284.

⁶⁴ Tulluu, Galataa. Interview. 10 February 2015.

while they (the cats) are still around, no matter how little the milk is and how many men from inside are expecting the milk. The other one is that it is also *safuu* to beat a cat. They have a proverb for this, Badhaasaa Silgaa told me. He says: “*Adaadaafi adurree hin dhaanani*”⁶⁵, meaning *aunt and cats should not be beaten*. When you look at the benefits they get from cats, it is really insignificant. But they still respect, love and take care of them just as much as they do for other animals that bears benefit for them.

We can also take, as an instance, other domestic animal which is of great importance to the Oromo and to which they pay great respect that is cattle. Cattles have special place in the life of Oromo society in general. They are a sign of blessing and wealth. A person who has many heads of cattle is considered to be a blessed and wealthy man. Besides having a special place in Oromos’ life, they also have special importance for Oromo society. They use the byproduct of their milk like cheese and butter for consumption, and plough their farmlands with them. Here is an interesting ethics Oromo women show toward their cow while milking. Basically no woman just milks a cow without giving it something to eat. It is unethical to milk a cow while the cow is not eating anything. In some other cultures and Oromo community there was a practice of tying the legs of cows together while milking (*gaadi’uu*). But in principle it is *safuu* to tie the cow’s legs together while milking because the Oromo condemn such an act as act of cruelty inflicted against nature because of one’s selfish interest. Here what one needs to note is that a woman is only allowed to milk that which is left after the calf has had enough of it. It is *safuu* to milk a cow before the calf feeds on milk from the breast of the cow, to insure that it would get as much as it needs if it is allowed to feed before the cow is milked.

Moreover, Oromo society uses oxen for farming purposes. They plough their land with oxen. The kind of ethics they have for cows is also given to oxen. One cannot beat oxen with a stick either during ploughing the farmlands or anytime; but rather he/she uses something made up of rope which is called *qancee* in Afaan Oromo. Even when one ploughs land with oxen one should not beat them with *qancee*, for it is immoral to do so. It is *safuu*. The other thing is that when you plough maize land (*boqolloo babbaquu*), it is *safuu* to tie up their mouth so that they would not eat the plants of maize. If it is for the interest of the farmer, here it is very important to tie up the

⁶⁵ Badhaasaa, Silgaa. Interview. 18 February 2014.

mouth of the oxen and beat them sometimes with *qancee*. But farmers would not do that simply because it is harmful to the oxen, and hence unethical. The oxen should be allowed to eat while ploughing. The respect Oromo have for cattle go much further. They sing songs for praising or thanking their cattle, and more importantly, they celebrate a day for their cattle. There is a holiday for the cattle which is called *Ayyaana Loonii*. People only celebrate a day for something they have a great respect for.

The other thing that should be considered is the *safuu* that exists between the Oromo people and wild animals. It is evident that they take care of the animals to make their survival and procreation possible. As they are part of nature, Oromo people respect animals as ends in themselves which disregards the pursuit of benefit for the agent. The Oromo treats both domestic and wild animals with great care, even though the degree of care varies. For example, they do not kill young wild animal even during hunting as we have already seen. Very interesting thing is the attitude these people have towards wild animals that eat their farm crop.

When some wild animals eat their crop, they do not kill those wild animals. Nor do they curse and insult them. They even do not scream at them loudly but rather address them in a low voice. An old man once said that “[p]eople do not like a man who curses the monkeys and birds, when they come to eat his crop.”⁶⁶ It is important again to recall the concept of *ayyaana* here. Every creature, including man and other wild and domestic animals, live according to their own *ayyaana*. It is, then, *safuu* not to live according to one’s own *ayyaana* and not to let others live according to their *ayyaana*. Thus if a monkey comes to a man’s farm and eats her crop, it is the monkey’s *ayyaana* that makes it to do so. They, the Oromo, think *Waaqa* has given man more crop than He has given the wild animals putting their, the animals, share in what is given to man.

People are not angry with the birds and animals when they eat their grain. True, they chase them away, but in former times they would always do so with soft words without insulting them. They would say: ‘*Ushe, ushe*, may [Waaqa] make you feel satisfied with little.’ [Waaqa] has given man more grain than [He] has given to the animals and birds, and if the latter come to eat from it, they would do this with [Waaqa’s] permission; without it they would not come. [Waaqa] himself causes them to do so; it is their [ayyaana].

⁶⁶L. Bartels, op. cit., 342.

Therefore, man should never curse them... and he should never say to them in anger: 'May [Waaqa] 'eat' you!'⁶⁷

The Oromo think that Waaqa (God) created every member of the earth for each other. They say the animals have no one except human beings to take care of them, and we depend, directly or indirectly, on them in some aspects of our life. This is based on the philosophy of being-in-the-world. The Oromos think they are in the world as much as the animals and other living and nonliving things are. They all live in the world, and they are all equally legitimate to make use of things in the world in accordance with their respective ayyaana. It would not be considered as breaking safuu if one does what its ayyaana lets it to do no matter what. Consequently, it is not wrong (not in the sense of morality, for monkey is considered to be moral patient) if a monkey eats man's crop, for it is not the monkey's ayyaana to plough and grow crop like man does. But it is safuu if man does not let the monkey eat just a little from her crop. Because man, in doing so, is not letting the monkey to live according to its ayyaana; and this is considered as spoiling Waaqa's creation. The Oromo think that it is not only their moral obligation to let animals feed on their crop, but they also think that Waaqa blesses them when they do it. "[Waaqa] himself blesses us, if we do not begrudge the animals their share in what he has given us. He blesses us, because we uphold his [safuu], the [safuu] he has put between us and the [animals]."⁶⁸ Thus letting the animals eat from their crop is not only a way to respect and uphold safuu, it is also considered to be a way to receive blessings from Waaqa and the ayyaana of the animals. When the animals are satisfied, their ayyaana will also be satisfied and blesses those who make it satisfied. The people have extra motivation, which is more blessing, to respect the safuu Waaqa has put between all His creations. Waaqa's and animal's blessings will not happen unless man fulfills the safuu. But how much should the people allow the animals to eat from their crop? How harsh should the people be when the animals come to eat their crop?

True, the people will not let the animals eat all of their crops, nor do they let them over-eat from just one place. They chase them away with soft words while also blessing them saying: *may Waaqa cause you feel satisfied with little*. Even when the animals get out of control and tend to eat too much of their grain, they do not think of exterminating such harmful animals. Bartels

⁶⁷ Ibid., 343.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 344.

states that people prefer to keep watch on their crops day and night at considerable pains to themselves rather than exterminating such harmful animals and pests systematically.⁶⁹ They rather perform a ritual at different times to bless the animals and to pray to Waaqa so that He makes them feel satisfied with little and prevent hail and storm from harming their crops. One should note that, here, they pray that hail and storm should not come at all, when the animals should come but only not eat too much.

Moreover, during harvest time people do not take the entire crop to home; they leave some of it behind for animals that can feed on the kind of that crop. They leave behind the share of the animal that Waaqa put in their crop. They do this in order to avoid mistreating God's creature and not to deny the animals a means of survival. Denying a means of survival to animals is tantamount to taking their life away; an act which is considered as the highest breach of safuu.

Their deep care for the wellbeing of animals is one of the reasons behind the Oromo's protection of forest. According to this people, forest is believed to be *home* of wild lives. One of the greatest sins in the culture of this people is to burn down someone's house. It is safuu to do so. Similarly, it is safuu (immoral) to burn down or clear forest that is *Waaqa-built-home* of wild animals. For Oromo people, it is as much immoral to burn down forest which is home of wild animals as it is to burn down humans' house. For instance, I remember what my grandfather told me and warned me not to do when I was too young. Here is the story. A bird makes her nest under the roof of our house, and I tried to take it down so that the bird could stay away. My grandfather saw me trying to do that and warned me to stop. He told me that nothing in this world is solely for humans, the bird is ours and we are hers, too. Waaqa created us for each other, and man is responsible for any damage she does to the creature, since she alone is capable of reasoning and being moral. Hence it is safuu to destroy a bird's nest, her home, as much as it is to destroy humans'.

Furthermore, no traditional Oromo individual cuts down a tree without planting a tree in place of it at least before two years. Even if she has planted a tree in place of the one she is cutting down, one should not cut a tree that is straight and capable of growing; instead one ought to cut down a tree that is less straight, incapable of growing and not so much good if left to exist. One should

⁶⁹ Ibid., 343.

not dump waste materials, garbage and dead body of animals by riverside and pollute the river. This is not only for the sake of animals and humans who use the water of that river for drinking but also for the harmony and beauty of the cosmic-order. It is safuu to cut down a tree and pollute river. This works timelessly. It works during peace and war time. Milkeessaa told me that the safuu that governs or guides the Oromo people during peace-time also enlightens them during war-time. For instance, “it is safuu to burn enemies’ forest and pollute their water.”⁷⁰ It is rarely possible to find something that can show a respect a particular society has for a nature than this. In the eyes of the Oromo, particular content of the environment, even if it is the property of an enemy, is not an enemy itself. You shall not destroy them. It is safuu.

Oromo people in general, as I said earlier, have a great respect for nature and its all constituents. Besides their usefulness in their life, the Oromo treat animals with great ethics which is only different from, but not less than, the ethics they have to treat other fellow humans. In conclusion, when one looks at the Oromo philosophy of humans, animals, or nature in general, he/she proves that it is very friendly. There is no severe exploitation (One should note that there is a difference between using and exploiting something/someone)⁷¹. Even Oromo people treat in an ethical way an animal they have little respect for. Take donkey, for instance. Calling someone a donkey, or *harree* is an insult in Oromo society as a result of little respect they have for it. But they still treat donkey in an ethical manner. It is immoral to load a pregnant donkey (They say: *Harree rimaa fe’uun safuudha*). Therefore, it can be generalized that Oromo society has a friendly relationship with nature as a whole, and treat the whole nature ethically. Their attitude and worldview is environmentally very friendly. These attitude and worldview are based on the philosophy of *interconnectedness* and *interdependence*. Some points can evidently be derived from this philosophy. It implies that: i) human beings are members of the earth’s community same as all

⁷⁰ Midhega, Milkessa. Interview. 6 May 2015.

⁷¹ To use something is to do something with a particular tool, method, service, ability, etc in order to achieve a particular purpose, or to do a particular job. Man always gets services of different kind from other men and her environment, and sometimes uses other men in order to achieve her goal in life. On the other hand, to exploit is to treat someone/something unfairly in order to gain an advantage, or to use someone/something for one’s own advantage, even when this is morally wrong. With regard to humans, the problem is not using them but it is using them against or without their consent and treating them only as a mere means to one’s end. With nature, the problem is not using them without their consent (for animals and other members of nature either lack consent or humans do not understand their consent), but the problem lies with lack of wise utilization of nature and in considering them as lacking intrinsic value and hence mere means to our goal.

other species; ii) all species are part of a system of interdependence; iii) all living things pursue their own good in their own ways according to the ayyaana of each, and iv) human being is only different but not inherently superior to other living things. They do not have dualistic worldview. They do not think of themselves and nature as different. The Oromo do not claim they are out there or outside of nature. They think *they are part of, and in the order of nature; and all are interconnected that everything depends upon one another*. Animals and nature, in general, have no one except humans to take care of them and hence man should treat all of them with the Safuu that Waaqa has put between them. This way, they think, they will respect and uphold the safuu that Waaqa has put between man and animals and get His blessings. Evidently, treating nature with respect and upholding Waaqa's safuu has a double effect. By keeping Waaqa's safuu: i) they keep the environment healthy and make the world a better place to live in; and ii) they get blessings from Waaqa for upholding His safuu.

3.4.2. Safuu and Children's and Women's Right

The issues of child exploitation and women's equality are among the modern human concerns. There are laws and codes against these two problems adopted by governments of different countries lately. Children are suffering from forced-labor. They are being given a task beyond their capacity and held responsible for not performing it. They are being used as commodities. Child-trafficking has become one of the serious problems of our time. This problem, alongside that of women, has become social, ethical, religious and political problem. It is being approached in different ways. But for the Oromo these issues have been simply ethical, and not even a problem. There are different principles of safuu which could solve the problem through different customs. Let us first look at the children's place in the Oromo universe and how their right is protected through their customs.

According to the Oromo society, children are a gift of God. They say in their mother tongue: *Ijoolleen kennaa Waaqaati*. As we have seen in the foregoing discussion, it is only Waaqa that can give life, any kind of life; and that man has the duty to treat what Waaqa gives to her with great care. Children in general are given special attention in the Oromo society. There is safuu between parents and children. The Oromo's attitude is very different toward children particularly in their early childhood. "They go to great lengths to protect [the children] from harm. They are

always ready to give them love and attention.”⁷² It is safuu to not protect ones child. A failure to protect any child from harm is also safuu. One is responsible to protect not only her child, but any child from any kind of harm. Children, according to the Oromo society, are anyone’s priority. More important is that it is safuu to punish children physically. The parent is prohibited by safuu from punishing them physically. The act of disciplining a child is done not physically, but rather verbally and/or psychologically. Asmerom explains this as follows: “[The Oromo] seem to be able to discipline [their children] by means of verbal admonitions, threats, and withholding subtler psychological rewards to which the children are accustomed.”⁷³ This clearly shows that safuu perfectly protects children’s rights. Safuu guards children against exploitation, forced-labor, physical punishment and so on.

Moreover, safuu obliges the parent to pay due respect to, and care for the children. There is even a day, a holiday, for children. “[The Oromo] have Boys’ Day every year, which is known as *Taboree*.”⁷⁴ The word *Taboree* comes from Afaan Oromoo word “Tabor”, meaning “of tomorrow”. Generally, “Taboree means men of the future-children who take over the future.”⁷⁵ There is also a day for girls which is known as *Illilli* or *Ingiccaa*. During these days, Taboree and Illilli, both boys and girls gather together separately and enjoy special dishes prepared for the occasion, dance, sing and show their performing abilities without any interference from their parents. More importantly, both boys and girls, on their day, are exempted from any duty; they are not reproached under any condition, nor disciplined.⁷⁶ They enjoy their absolute freedom under the protection of their parents. It is immoral to deny children this day, and parents have the duty to facilitate the day for them. This idea of celebrating days for children shows the respect this people have for them.

⁷² Asmerom Legesse, *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), 52.

⁷³ *Ibid*, pp. 53.

⁷⁴ Dirribii Demise, *Oromo Wisdom in Black Civilization* (Finfine, Ethiopia: Finfine Printing and Publishing S.C., 2011), 94.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

The issue of women's right is a very recent phenomenon for the modern world. It was raised as a result of the abuse of women that takes different forms. Women were denied their social, economic and political rights as a result of the emergence of patriarchal society. Later on, with modernity, women all over the world started questioning the received superiority of men. They tried to change the situation of women. They started reclaiming what they had lost to unreasonable men of the patriarchal society. One of the things that modernity marks is the rise of women's right. Movements like feminism started during the modern period to reclaim women's right to everything.

However, to the Oromo society, this issue of women's right is not new. It has always been in their norms. They have different oral traditions that report that some active women ruled the Oromo society in the old days. Nevertheless, this is not the issue that is going to be discussed. The concern here is the rights that women enjoy alongside their responsibility in the early Oromo society. Women have a special place and special roles in Oromo society. This special attention and place given to women is regardless of their ages and their actual importance in a particular family and/or the society as a whole.

One of the ways women had been abused was through arranged marriages. Women of different culture were being given to a man they have never met just because their family wanted it. A woman cannot make a choice of her own about who she would marry. A woman cannot refuse to marry a man her family selected for her while a man can. But this is not the case in Oromo society as different oral and written texts state. An old man once told me that there is nothing like arranged marriage in their, Oromo, culture. "The concept of arranged marriage is new to us. Of course we have a marriage negotiation in which the parents of both the boy and the girl get involved. The boy and the girl are also involved here."⁷⁷ Negotiation and arrangement have clearly different meanings. In negotiation parties try to reach an agreement or compromise through discussion whereas arrangement is organizing or planning something in advance. Thus, simply, the Oromos do not arrange marriage for their children. They negotiate.

During this negotiation the family of the boy asks the family of the girl to give her to their boy. The family of the man asks only when the guy shows some interest, and likewise the family of

⁷⁷ Mardassa, Jabessa. Interview. 15 March 2015.

the girl only allows, even to start the negotiation, when the girl gives her consent. “No Oromo father gives his daughter away to the man she does not want to take as her husband and that she does not like to live with. It is Safuu to do so.”⁷⁸ There has to be consent of the girl in the marriage negotiation process. If the girl is not interested, no matter how much both parents want the marriage to happen, there would be no marriage. “In any case there can be no marriage without the girl’s consent”⁷⁹, explains Asmerom. It is safuu, according to the Oromo, to make a marriage happen without the interest of the girl. The right of a girl to marry only a man of her choice is granted to every girl of the society by this morality. This is one way safuu, the Oromo moral principle, protects women’s rights.

Furthermore, if one wants to speak of the place and rights women have in Oromo society, two things are worth mentioning. These things are *Siiqqee* and *Qanafaa*. Let us look at both of them separately.

Siiqqee is a straight thin stick given to a marrying girl by her mother as a sign of maturity. It indicates that the daughter is now able to shoulder the responsibility and handle things herself as she departs, and that the mother is no longer a guardian of the girl. That *siiqqee* is a straight and thin stick does not mean that a woman could use it for other purposes, for instance, driving cattle or as a support for walking. “It is a symbol of pride for a married woman.”⁸⁰ It is not a stick a woman holds un-occasionally. The women hold it on a special day for a special purpose. Oromo men show great respect to a woman with *siiqqee*. For instance, if a man comes across a woman holding *siiqqee*, he does not directly intercept the woman. If he is on a horse back he disembarks from the horse back, greets the woman respectfully, and takes leave of her. The man asks for her permission to get back on the horse and pass by. Anyone who meets a woman with *siiqqee* on a road should receive her blessing and get her permission to go across her.⁸¹ *Siiqqee*, in general, represents women’s right. An interest of a woman with *siiqqee* always comes first. “No one dares to refuse instructions given by a woman with [*siiqqee*]. Whatever she demands is given to

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ A. Legesse, op. cit., 29.

⁸⁰ D. Demise, op. cit., 124.

⁸¹ Ibid., 124 and 173.

her.”⁸² *Siiqqee* is a sign of authority of women. A man who does not treat a woman holding *siiqqee* with respect is a man who does not know safuu, according to the Oromo. It is immoral to disrespect such a woman.

Moreover, it is surprising that a woman with *siiqqee* is more powerful than elders in conflict resolution and reconciliation. *Siiqqee* is a symbol of conflict resolution, reconciliation and harmony. Ahmed Sheka once told me the following: “When two parties involve in a violent fight, the women emerge with their *siiqqee* and stand in the middle of the fighting parties to keep them apart. The fighting parties would immediately stop fighting.”⁸³ I, then, asked him why. “They should stop fighting just for the great honor of the women standing between them holding *siiqqee*. It is safuu to not obey a woman with *siiqqee*.”⁸⁴ *Siiqqee* is a symbol of authority of women. It gives more power to the physically weak women than the warrior men. No matter how strong the fighting bodies are, no one keeps on fighting when women are asking them to stop fighting holding their *siiqqee*.

While an intense war is underway between clans, amid serious fighting and among rows of dead and injured soldiers women interfere carrying their [*siiqqee*] and chanting ateeete songs. If women appear with [*siiqqee*] cease-fire is immediate. No mediator or negotiator could do the same. This is self-evidently unparalleled authority of Oromo women. No matter how might they are, it is impossible for the fighting parties to say no to the authority of [*siiqqee*].⁸⁵

The other thing that is a symbol of women’s right is *Qanafaa*. *Qanafaa* is common especially in Arsii Oromo. It is an ornament, which is worn on the forehead, for a woman who has just given birth to a child. Women are proud to wear it. It is a symbol of pride for a woman who has got a child. According to this norm, a woman wears *qanafaa* for four to five months after delivery. The purpose of wearing *qanafaa*, according to one of my informants from Arsi Oromo, is “to give rest and treatment to a woman who just gave birth and to exempt her from any duty, for such a woman gets physically weak in this period as she loses much energy during pregnancy

⁸² Ibid., 173.

⁸³ Ahmed, Sheka. Interview. 17 March 2014.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ D. Demise, op. cit., 174.

and bleeds at delivery.”⁸⁶ It is obvious, then, that *qanafaa* tradition is developed for the purpose of protecting rights of a woman who just gave birth. It frees a woman from any kind of duty or responsibility for a specific period of time. Even the husband cannot reproach a woman wearing *qanafaa*. “A husband wouldn’t beat up a wife who wears [*qanafaa*]. It is also [safuu] to reproach a woman with [*qanafaa*].”⁸⁷ It is everyone’s duty to respect this safuu. It is safuu for the husband to beat up or put so much duty on a woman until her *qanafaa-period* is over.

When a husband breaks this safuu and beat up his wife or abuses her, the woman makes her voice heard to the other neighboring women who then come holding their *Siiqqees* in order to punish him. “A man that abused a wife with [*qanafaa*] would be ready to accept whatever fine the group of [*Siiqqee*] women could impose on him.”⁸⁸ It is obvious that the recent idea of *maternity leave* for women is not a new phenomenon to the traditional Oromo society. The idea of maternity leave is developed with the purpose of protecting women’s right. Same way, the tradition of *qanafaa* has the purpose and effect of protecting women from harassment and abuses, as always, and from other unreasonable duties, duties which could probably be reasonable at normal time, during pregnancy and post-delivery. The safuu that underlies the *qanafaa* system well protects women’s right at work and at home, and everywhere.

In a general term, as it is the case with environment, the respect and morality the Oromo disposes toward women and children persist during peace-time and war-time. It is timeless. The Oromo do not consider women and children of their enemies as enemy. They say: “*Ijoolleefi dubartiin diinummaa hin qabdu.*”⁸⁹ This means that children and women are no enemy. It is safuu to attack women and children of enemy even during war. This is one way that the respect and morality Oromo people have for children and women is clearly manifested. This respect and morality strongly protects their rights, especially their human right, in many aspects.

⁸⁶ Abdallaa, Gammada. Interview. 17 March 2014.

⁸⁷ D. Demise, op. cit., 176.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 176.

⁸⁹ Milkessa, Midhega. Interview. 6 May 2015.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

4.1. Summary

The nature of man and the mode of her existence make ethics one of the necessary things for the survival and development of human life. Humans need to live socially in order to make their lives fulfilled. Men depend upon one another and the environment in order to achieve their survival needs and live a luxurious life. The question, however, is: *How ought one to act while trying to achieve these needs within a society of humans who most likely have the same needs as her?* It is plausible to think that almost all men want to live a happy and fulfilled life. In order to achieve this end, man has to make use of natural resources, which everyone is equally legitimate to, and other men (in the sense of mutual support). This is the fact of life. Human society is a society of selfish and goal-oriented individuals who, necessarily, have to exist socially. Within such human society there should exist something that tells us how we ought to act in order to create a harmonious society. It is as a response to this need that different ethical theories are formulated. Each of them gives its own account of moral and immoral action.

Consequentialists argue that the moral rightness or wrongness of any given act should be decided by its consequences: We have to wait for its consequence to judge the moral worth of the act. In other words, a moral action is one that produces good or desirable consequences. Deontologists, on the other hand, argue that the morality of any act is determined never by its consequences but by the agent's performance of duty: It is all about performing our duty and giving zero value and consideration to its consequences. However, these moral theories do not answer as many moral questions as they are supposed to answer. They cause more problems than they solve.

In chapter three of the thesis I have exhaustively presented general critiques against teleology and deontology. Let me briefly mention the problems and show how Safuu can correct the problems in the form of summary.

As I argued in chapter two, adopting *absolute consequentialism* results in further moral problems. For consequences never remain the same all the time and everywhere, it is wrong to rely solely on the consequences to decide the morality of an action. Even within the same context

the goodness and badness of an act varies from person to person. Furthermore, focusing only on an action's consequence may result in engaging into an action which has immediate pleasurable consequences giving rise to an enduring pain in the long run. Consequentialism is not directive. Any act is open to be performed in the world of *absolute consequentialists*, for consequentialism does not tell whether or not an act is moral before engaging into the action. It is a wait and see principle. Sometimes there occurs a mismatch of intended result and actual outcome of an act. A good result maybe intended and the opposite may actually happen. According to the principles of consequentialism, self and human race is at the center of moral decision making. This results in the exploitation of nature.

Deontology, having the same effect of environmental exploitation like consequentialism, seems unlikely to apply to real life because of goal-centered human nature and seems to be nonexistent in its purest sense. Deontology treats only humans as having intrinsic value. Man is the only most important entity in the universe and hence must be at the heart of moral decision-making. This anthropocentric view results in abuse of nature and downplays humans' moral responsibility toward nature. Deontology seems incompatible with goal-oriented human nature, for there is no human being without goal and no human act performed without purpose.

Moreover, categorical imperative is best interpreted as *hypothetical imperative*. If you take one element of the formulation of categorical imperative, it says: *do whatever you would at the same time will that it should become a universal law*. This is another way to say, for instance, do not rob if you do not want to be robbed. When you rob others you are universalizing robbery which leaves you vulnerable to robbery in the future, for now it has become a universal truth by you doing it. An action has to pass this test before becoming a duty. Since this test takes the consequence of the action into account more than anything, categorical imperative itself is not categorically imperative. It is hypothetical imperative, and hence not purely deontological.

Moreover, since the agent of morality is man, the moral rules that we formulate must be compatible with human nature. But deontology fails this compatibility test. Because it wants us to give zero value to the consequence of our action and detaches any end from our duty and our performing the duty in order to be moral. This kind of theory is incompatible with goal-centered human nature. It is, therefore, evident that deontology in its pure sense and its application to real life is impossible.

Safuu is a deep moral principle that is based on respect for nature and observing the distance Waaqa put between things. Everything-living and nonliving-has intrinsic value that persons pursue as an end. Safuu is a moral law Waaqa has given to man for respecting the harmonious relations of these things. All things exist according to the ayyaana of their own. Safuu is a holistic moral concept. What matters in moral decision-making is not the interest of a single entity, but that of the entire universe. Oromo morality, safuu, is based on the idea of oneness of the universe. The action of anybody takes into consideration the consequence of the act on the whole universe. As in consequentialism, it is not the consequence of an act for the agent or for the whole human being that determines the morality of an act, but rather the general wellbeing of the cosmos. In this respect, safuu is very similar to modern *Ecocentrism*. Ecocentrism is a philosophy or perspective that places intrinsic value on all living organisms and their natural environment, regardless of their perceived usefulness or importance to human beings. In safuu the moral end is the maintenance of the cosmic-order, not the attainment of pleasure and avoidance of pain. A man who leads her life according to the principles of safuu refrains from engaging in an action that would bring her an immediate pleasure if she knows that the act will spoil the cosmic order in the long run. At the center of a moral decision making is not the agent, but the cosmos.

Safuu corrects the incompatibility problem of deontology. It tells us that a morally right action is one that keeps the healthy functioning of the cosmos. That is, if the consequence of our action spoils the cosmic-order it is immoral. Not only we consider the consequence of our action, but also the consequence of performing the act. Man receives blessings from Waaqa for doing a morally good thing besides contributing to the maintenance of the harmonious cosmic and social order. This perfectly serves the need of goal-oriented human being. Man always aims at something. We want rewards (be it material, spiritual, or psychological) for whatever things we do. Thus, living ones life according to the principles of safuu helps man to make the world a better place to live, and to bring her God's blessings which is an additional reward and incentive to be moral. It is such a system that makes a man to be more moral than sticking to some kind of duty (that man thinks does help her to achieve nothing) does.

Environmental exploitation is one of the burning issues of our time that both moral theories-teleology and deontology could not tackle. Rather both theories strip nature of its intrinsic value

making only human being the most important entity in the universe. According to safuu, however, all species are part of the system of interdependence. Human being is only different but not inherently superior to other living things. All living things pursue their own good in their own way according to their ayyaana. A man of safuu respects the way of life of others' and keeps the distance between nature and herself. The wellbeing of the environment is as equally important as the wellbeing of human race is. Both are intrinsically valuable. Animals, plants, humans, and all other kinds of smaller life forms and non-living beings are equally legitimate to exist in the universe leading their life the way their ayyaana lets them to. It is immoral to overstep the boundary Waaqa has put between nature, and to change or force to change the way of life of others.

Moreover, it is the whole system, not a particular entity, that matters most for moral decision-making. Therefore, Oromo moral system, safuu, protects environment more than deontology and teleology do. Safuu is environmentally friendly. Both living and non-living things matter alike in its moral decision-making. Man is only different, not inherently superior, to the other entities of the cosmos.

The idea of *Waaqa's withdrawal and nonexistence of life after-death* in safuu on one hand makes it different from other *religious moralities* and on the other hand, contributes a lot to the protection of environment. In some religions it is believed that man is eternal whereas other species are not. This *eternality* of man is taken as an evidence for the superiority of man to all other entities. But in the Oromo religious worldview there is no eternity of man, or of any entity. Everything is mortal except the cosmic-system itself. If there is anything superior, it is the cosmic-system. If the general system malfunctions, then no other subsystem would function properly. Safuu recognizes every species in the cosmos as contributing to the smooth functioning of the cosmos, and each of them equally matters in moral decision-making. Any action is judged on its contribution to the proper-functioning of the cosmic-system. This is also another way safuu well protects the environment.

Generally, the way we treat things depends on how we define and value them. If you define a man as having only instrumental value and having no goals of her/his own, then you treat man as a *mere means* to your end and deny her/him any opportunity to strive to achieve her/his goal. Similarly, how humans define the environment (their surroundings including its living and

nonliving contents) influences the way they treat the environment. If man thinks that the world was created only to serve human purpose, then environmental exploitation is evident. But if man thinks that everything is created for the sake of itself, then it has an intrinsic value. In that sense everything is free to pursue its own goal, and then man would treat other beings the way she/he treats other fellow humans. At least she/he takes her/his hands off their matter. Likewise, the principles of safuu are based on the attitudes the Oromo have toward nature- *Oneness*. There is only one universe in which everything is bound together, and everything matters alike. The wellbeing of the whole system depends on the attitude and act of each member; and the wellbeing of each member depends on the wellbeing of the cosmic system. When the cosmic system is spoiled, there is no way that the life of each member of the system remains unspoiled, for the wellbeing of each member depends on the proper functioning of the general cosmic-system. Each member has to keep the boundary between him/herself and others, has to live according to his/her own ayyaana and let others to do so.

However, if any of them fail to do so, then the cosmic-order would go chaotic. When the cosmic-order is spoiled everyone's life would be disturbed. This is so because the universe is bound altogether and the wellbeing of each member highly depends on the proper functioning of the whole system. That is why safuu urges everyone to act in such a way that *our acts contribute to the wellbeing and proper functioning of the cosmic system*.

There is a reason everything *is* the way it is. Understanding this is understanding ayyaana. A man cannot act like an angel, or a lion. A lion can also not act like a man. That is the way they are made. Forcing a man to act like a lion, or lion like a man, is breaking safuu. Such an act spoils the cosmic-order. It is the lion's ayyaana that makes it act like a lion, and it is man's ayyaana to make him/her not to act like a lion. The same is true about all other things. Man has the responsibility of keeping the cosmic-order because of her linguistic, rational and physical advantage over the others. This advantage, however, cannot make man superior. In the Oromo universe there is only one cosmic-system and everyone in the system matters alike and contributes to the proper functioning and/or malfunctioning of the system. None is superior. Only the cosmic-order is everyone's priority.

4.2. 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 hin dhoksan*”, 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.⁹⁰ No matter where one is, there is no escape from safuu. Safuu’s universality⁹¹ is further made valid by Waaqa’s omnipresence. It is Waaqa who looks after safuu. It is Waaqa who one thinks would see her if she plans to do or does something evil or something against safuu secretly. It is not man, or not one’s own conscience, that man hides from while mis-performing safuu. One can get out of sight of everybody; or one can silence her own conscience in order to achieve something. But one can never get out of sight of Waaqa. He is just everywhere. Further, one cannot say there is no safuu here and therefore nothing binds me. For safuu is everywhere. Wherever you are there is safuu there, and there is Waaqa who looks after safuu. The principles of safuu are always binding and valid everywhere.

Safuu has no limit. It is everywhere, and it *is* anytime. It does not work only within a narrowly restricted limit. This is so because it has the omnipresent and transcending moral authority, Waaqa, at its heart. This makes someone to never become and/or feel free from moral responsibility. A person is not accountable to the society or to herself. She is accountable to Waaqa. Therefore, no one becomes morally irresponsible anywhere at any time, since Waaqa is everywhere and always is.

⁹⁰ L. Bartels, op. cit., 333.

⁹¹ Here universality does not mean that it is objectively true or accepted. It is to say that, for the Oromo people, safuu is everywhere. If, for instance, an Oromo individual who used to live in Oromia abiding by the principles of safuu moved to America, the individual would not think he is no more responsible to the principles of safuu.

4.3. Recommendation

At the end of my thesis, I want to recommend what I think is a better moral system to solve the problem of our world on the basis of what I found out from the study of two Western moral systems- Deontology and Teleology, and Oromo moral system which is known as Safuu. A morality that a given society adopts should be one that is multifunctional and one that does not cause more problems than it solves. It should be a morality that is relevant to the problems of the society, for *it is not how complex a moral system is, but rather how effective the morality is in solving the problems of the society adopting the system*. Most importantly, a moral system that a given society should adopt has to be one that can make the world a better place to live in. Making the world a better place means making it a better place not only for humans but also for every member of the universe. A world would be made a better place by keeping the environment healthy and clean. Thus our morality should also be environmentally friendly.

Moreover, as I said above 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 a moral system in which rights of everyone, regardless of their color and gender, is respected and protected, that teaches a wise utilization of one's resources, and that helps maintenance of harmony within a society. Lastly a moral system that has to be adopted should be one that is binding everywhere at anytime. It should be one that lets no one feel moral irresponsibility no matter when and where. It has to be timeless and spatialless. To make a morality beyond the limits of space and time, there has to be a body who is itself beyond the limits of space and time that looks after the principles of the moral system.

Now I want to put down what I think is the best alternative. Firstly, I say: *It is good if we formulate our moral principles not by assuming a godless universe*. What men have found in pleasure, virtue, reason, duty, etc. could not answer the primary problem of human existence. The consequentialists' pleasure can never be lasting, for it invariably gives way to more pain. Man remains a prisoner of her blind selfishness and goal-centeredness. In a world of misery, pain, and irrational strive duty cannot have so much influence. Can it even have a meaning? Can a consequentialist become successful? No way.

Certainly there must be some basis for morality. But what can it be? This standard or basis for morality must be something eternal and absolute. There has to be some eternal and transcending moral authority. Otherwise it can work only within a narrowly restricted limit. Not having some eternal and absolute moral authority makes someone morally responsible conditionally. That is, one may feel moral responsibility at some time and ignore that responsibility at another time. This, however, is not true morality, for it makes one feel morally responsible within a given boundary and ignore her moral responsibility when she is beyond the boundary. This is the result of lack of some eternal and transcending moral authority.

The existence of Supreme Being, who is omnipresent, all powerful and eternal, gives no end to moral responsibility. Unlike the godless universe, if God is everywhere and always is, so is morality. There is no place where one finds no God, and consequently, no place where one feels moral irresponsibility. As it is mentioned earlier, one can get beyond any given limit, whether it is beyond the norms of her family and society, or beyond her own internalized norms. One can hide from the eyes of the people and can silence her own conscience. But it is impossible to ever get beyond the authority of an all powerful and omnipresent God. Hence we must formulate/adopt a morality whose basis is God, because 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 be sure that God really *is*? 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, I say, nobody is sure about the existence of God, and nor of its nonexistence. Both theists and atheists commit fallacy while taking position on the existence of God. Atheists mostly claim to the lack of evidence for the existence of God on the part of theists. They claim that so long as it is theists who are making a positive claim the burden of proof falls on them. If they fail to prove what they are claiming, atheists say, we can ignore their claim right away without having a good reason for ignoring their claim simply because of their lack of evidence for the claim they make. They argue from lack of evidence or proof.

Moreover, theists also get into the trap of committing appeal to ignorance fallacy. They sometimes claim that God exists because His nonexistence has not yet been proved. Unless

atheists disprove the existence of God with evidence, the claim that God exists is true, they say. Both parties argue from lack of evidence. They commit a fallacy of appeal to ignorance. 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 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.

To adopt a moral system that has God at its heart does not necessarily need certainty about the existence of God. It is enough to just *assume that God exists*. It is way better to assume a Godly world while proposing morality. Assuming a Godly world helps to formulate a morality that has eternal and transcending moral authority as its basis.

We cannot find such a basis for morality either in Consequentialism or in Deontology. As long as we are humans our morality should not be that which contradicts with our nature like deontology, and should not be that which effects further enduring problems like consequentialism. It should not be too ideal. A moral system which is free of these problems is Safuu- which is Hypothetical Imperative. Its being hypothetical becomes absolutely binding by the existence of Waaqa (God). It absolutely bounds us without rejecting the consequences of our being bounded by it. By this ethical alternative, Safuu, we can replace the drawbacks of *absolute consequentialism*, and we can make the claim of deontology that says “Morality should be absolute and binding” possible, for the basis of this alternate moral system is the absolute, omnipresent and all-powerful God.

Conclusion

The question of how ought we to live together is the inescapable part of who we are. We often face situations where we have to make ethical decisions. Given this, we most certainly look for a guide in order to help us make a good decision. We look for a guide from our inner conscience, our society, from books, etc. There are different books and articles written in order to assist moral decision making and tell what action to perform and what not to. Some focused on the consequence of the act in question while others considered the nature of the act and its performance rather than its consequences as a test of a good action.

In the foregoing discussion I have shown that consequentialism results in further moral problems and that some of its principles make it difficult to apply to real life; and that deontology contradicts with goal-centered human nature and that it is nonexistent in its purest sense. I have shown that both of them result in environmental exploitation, for it is only human being that is at the center of moral decision-making and it is only human being that moral decision is made for in both theories. It is also the case with these two moralities that even if they do not have any problem in what they oblige us, they are not absolutely binding. Because they work only within a narrowly restricted limit which in turn makes one to become free from moral responsibility whenever she gets out of the limits. This is a problem that is caused by lack of an absolute and transcending authority that looks after the principles of morality. It is simply what a morality that assumes a godless world lacks.

Moreover, I have shown that there is an indigenous moral system that can correct all the drawbacks we see in teleology and deontology. As already mentioned, this indigenous moral system is called Safuu. Safuu is a moral system that the ancient Oromo people formulated in order to create a harmonious society and make their world a better place to live in. It is an indigenous moral system that is based on the respect for nature and keeping a distance between all the members of nature. It is clearly shown that safuu corrects the problems of consequentialism by avoiding the pursuit of immediate pleasure for the agent alone. It rather considers the consequence of an action on the proper functioning of the general comic system. It also corrects the problem of incompatibility in deontology. Deontology is incompatible with human nature because it urges a goal-centered human to not take into consideration any consequence of her action and to not aim at anything in order to be moral. But Safuu tells us to

consider the consequence of our action in terms of the harmony of the whole cosmic-order and the consequence of our doing the act to ourselves.

Environmentally, safuu addresses the problems that both teleology and deontology fail to address by considering the wellbeing of the whole cosmic-order more basic than human being. Finally, it is proved that assuming a Godly world while proposing a morality is better than assuming a godless world. Because it does not let anybody to be or feel moral irresponsibility despite place and time. For it has God at its center, the principles of safuu are always absolutely binding. Safuu is everywhere and always is.

Moreover, adopting safuu as a moral system further serves other social and political interests of a society. It solves many of the modern human problems. In addition to its great contribution to environmental conservation, safuu protects children's and women's rights. Adopting safuu as one's moral law or belief generally has the advantage of dispelling the drawbacks of the modern moral systems, teleology and deontology. This is so in addition to its invaluable contribution to the environmental conservation, and protection of children's and women's right.

However, there is one problem with Safuu. It is that Safuu revolves around and based on Supreme Being, Waaqa. If one takes Waaqa out of Safuu it would not stand as a moral system anymore. It will be empty. It will no more be absolutely binding. Nevertheless, this problem does not matter *that much*, for what makes Safuu better than other moral systems is that it has the Supreme Being, Waaqa, at its heart. We have seen that the morality that assumes a Godly world is way better than the one that assumes a godless world. Therefore, Safuu is still worth adopting even having the specific problem I just mentioned (problem of having Waaqa at its heart), for we have clearly seen that it corrects many drawbacks of the godless moralities like deontology and teleology, and that it makes invaluable contributions in making the world a better place to live provided that it is pursued.

Finally, I want to make clear that no idea is immune to critique. It is critiquing, arguing and conversing about ideas that makes the ideas clear and developed to a higher level of abstraction. Likewise, safuu is not immune to criticism, and it is not developed to the best possible level since much is not done about it. It is up to the thinkers, especially African thinkers, to critique, evaluate and argue about it so as to develop and make a problem-solving moral system.

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APPENDIX

No.	Name of Informants	Age	Date of Information	Place or District
1	Galataa Tulluu	52	2015	Dembi Dollo
2	Gammada Abdallaa	78	2014	Bale, Goba
3	Jabessa Mardassa	70	2015	Sebetta
4	Milkessa Midhega	32	2015	Finfine
5	Silгаа Badhaasaa	90	2014	Dembi Dollo
6	Sheka Ahmed	82	2014	Arsi