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Turning Point

Friday, May 11th, 2012, marked a turning point: for the first time, I acted upon my intuition. In the refuge of my mind, a place I often escaped to, the voice of truth and elements of reason began to align, painting a clear picture. The scattered puzzle pieces of my thoughts finally made sense. Propelled by an unshakable fear, yet feeling strangely prepared by my past, I faced a predestined crossroads. The choice was stark, with no middle ground: either continue living in the cult I was raised in, a place where my parents, having known each other for only three months, were arranged to be married upon joining, or abandon everything familiar, including the group of peers known as 'Turning Fourth.' This next generation, bred within the cult, would soon turn against and alienate not just me, but my family as well. The teachings and knowledge I had been provided with now seemed insufficient; I sensed there was more to the world than what was before my eyes, more than the abuse I had endured. Perhaps the only option was the expansion of my mind and the questioning of everything. The establishment, which I will not name but refer to as 'the Institution,' imparted teachings deeply rooted in Divine Command Theory. Here, *Plato's 'Euthyphro'* becomes relevant, presenting a seminal debate crucial to understanding DCT: is what is morally right determined solely by divine command? (Emlyn-Jones & Plato, 1991). These teachings now stood in stark contrast to my emerging beliefs and the concepts I would later discover in Contractualism. This paper is an exploration of that journey. Here, I will examine how the rigid doctrines of 'the Institution' and the broader perspectives of Divine Command Theory interplay with the more inclusive and cooperative principles of Contractualism. My aim is to analyze the ethical dimensions of my experiences within 'the Institution' and the impact of its teachings on our lives. Through this introspection, I intend to unravel the moral complexities of my past and explore how these contrasting ethical theories offer distinct insights into the challenges and decisions faced by those of us who were part of such a unique and isolating environment.

“We don’t want something from you, we want something for you.” With each and every timely lesson delivered and digested, the real bulk of the maintaining, was to, through “inflated gratuity” divide your share of physical work into an incomprehensible amount and offer it back towards the moral exemplars that created the community in which you live in. All profits were allocated into the pockets of such “teachers” and certain projects for the allowance of a community so large to join together daily. It was innate that because of this act, with the intention of giving back to a community so attributed to you succeeding in this life, in return your reward may be brought forth in the likes of physical miracles or an accumulated treasure chest in heaven for your departure of this physical plane. This ritual was one of many that was preached and cited by the texts of the skewed biblical concepts that made up the

congregation as well as the creator they worshiped in the sky that was never twice to forgive and watched as you stressed every dilemma in the physical world. The idea that we were all house plants, mere saplings in need of an individual to put us in the shade and water us daily, and failure to do so will result in the rejection of a being whom knew you were to be disconnected to begin with. And the tantalizing reality of having to work, "to get noticed" though it wasn't guaranteed was the will of the Institution and re-education thereof. With the concept of Divine command theory, it posits that moral values and duties are rooted in the commands of a divine being. This is exemplified in Robert Adams' modification of DCT, suggesting that such moral obligations arise from the commands of a loving God, a notion contrasting the authoritarian version experienced. The suggested take of what is morally right is what God commands, and what is wrong is shunned by the same source. The moral compass, that could be "in need of new batteries" as they would like to call it, is therefore intrinsically, linked to religious beliefs and interpretations of such commands that is of the divine. There is a sense of authority over human reasoning in moral decision-making. The institutions teachings were grounded in the idea that moral truth and ethical conduct were direct reflections of divine will. Actions and beliefs were not merely encouraged but mandated as expressions of divine command. For instance, the strict adherence to specific rituals and codes of conduct within, often at the expense of personal freedom and social norms, exemplified the application of Divine Command Theory. These practices, justified as obedience to divine authority, often overrode conventional moral judgments and societal ethics. One vivid example was the practice of arranged marriages, including that of my parents, and if I had stayed, myself was to be joined with a specific in my troupe. This practice was upheld as a divine command, superseding individual choice and traditional concepts of romantic love. The compliance with this practice was seen not just as adherence to the doctrine, that, "Individuals main priority is to not think of yourself, but the society in which founded you through god's love for you, and that love of him was shown to you here by the induvial whom encompass your surroundings it is made apparent that you must contribute by any means necessary, that the idea of physical work and spiritual work was made separate, and the time made for each was an expression of your excellence, therefore allegiance to your family, the body of one, which is all. Similarly, the segregation from the outside world and the rigorous indoctrination of the youth, including my group 'Turning Fourth,' were justified as fulfilling divine commands, regardless of the emotional or psychological impact on individuals. Though my division was brought up in my time at the institution, severed the differentializes of that of a public school. They stated, "The world is a systematic grid, and each country is operating a machine wielding to the collective of a higher source if powered together. Our countries components (U.S.A) is run by the syphoning of each and every induvial. We are statistically calculated based off a performance, the more you put in, the more you get out. And that, depending on the company your resources and time are allocated towards is a direct reflection of yourself. If the company who work for, is involved in unjust and immoral acts, you, despite your position and knowledge of such actions are taking place, are directly responsible for the entirety of the consequences and bad karma associated with. Therefore, partake in the deep work associated with our mission and allow there to be no consequence unyoked in you to achieving the consideration of the deity above."

The application of the Divine common theory within the institution, frosted a sense of unearthly clarity and alignment with the source among the members. Its strengths served as a clear guideline and

directives, believe to be divinely ordained, and provided a framework for ethical work. Few of the families involved in the hierarchy of the institution experienced an, “increase in physical funds” and its miraculous rewards brought forth here on earth, were all dedicated and accredited to the institutions attitude towards “giving first before you receive”, instilling confirmations to the members who felt united in their adherence to what they believed were divine instructions. However, a weakness in the reliance of this, resulted in substantial and significant point both ethical and moral. Their forefront of moral reasoning was often justified by action that were both seen as harmful and alienating. Many individuals as well as their families went into debt, personal autonomy, and the emotional plus psychological consequences of practices like that of arranged marriages, and the alienation of members who questioned the doctrine, resulted in many deaths within the community by either natural or unnatural ways of exit. The range of more deaths that were youthful far surpassed that of the adults. In conclusion, while Divine Commentary Theory provided a clear moral structure within 'the Institution,' it also fostered an environment where critical thinking and personal moral judgment were often suppressed in favor of a rigid interpretation of divine will.

Contractualism, which stems from social contract theory, posits that moral norms and societal structures are based on an implicit or explicit agreement among individuals. This idea is rooted in the works of thinkers like *Thomas Hobbes in 'Leviathan'* (Hobbes, 1651). and *John Rawls in 'A Theory of Justice,'* (Höffe & Haan, 2013). Who articulates the foundation of societal ethics on mutual agreements and the collective good. While this theory emphasizes mutual respect, and cooperation, the understanding that ethical behavior is the result of consensual agreements. Those agreements promote the welfare of all involved. Ethical actions and societal rules are justified by the collective and the level of acceptance of those governed by them is high, though it breeds an undertone of importance of individual autonomy, mutual understanding, and the collective good in ethical decision making. The dynamics within 'the Institution' sharply contrasted with the principles of Contractualism, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 'The Social Contract'* Rousseau, (J.-J. & Vaughan, 1962). Offers a critical perspective on how such contracts can fail, turning oppressive—mirroring the authoritarian dynamics. The institution's structure and practices often breached the key tenets of a social contract, particularly in terms of undermining individual autonomy and mutual respect. For instance, the strict adherence to the cult's doctrine often meant that individual preferences, beliefs, and freedoms were subjugated to the group's ideology. This disregard for personal autonomy starkly violates the Contractualist idea that ethical behavior is rooted in mutual consent and respect for individual rights. Reflecting on my experience, eventual alienation from the institution as well as my family highlights a significant breach of the social contract's emphasis on the welfare of all parties. The leadership and doctrines placed by the group's ideology above the well-being of individual members. Decisions were made not through a process of mutual agreement, but rather through top-down edicts that served the hierarchical family's interests, often at the expense of personal and familial welfare. In an ideal application, Contractualism promotes ethical behavior that respects individual rights and considers the collective welfare of all involved. It encourages a democratic approach to ethical decision-making, where mutual respect and cooperation form the basis of moral actions and societal norms. This approach can lead to more inclusive and just

communities where individuals feel valued and their autonomy is respected. However, the principles of Contractualism face significant challenges in authoritarian or insular groups like 'the Institution.' In such settings, the notion of consent and mutual agreement is often compromised or entirely absent. The top-down imposition of rules and the suppression of dissent within the institution illustrate how the social contract can be skewed or non-existent in such environments. Members are often coerced or indoctrinated into accepting the group's norms, undermining the Contractualist ideal of consensual ethical agreements. This analysis has illuminated the profound challenges of applying Contractualist principles in environments where individual respect and autonomy are undermined. In the context of 'the Institution,' the freedom to think independently and make collective decisions was significantly curtailed, highlighting a deviation from the ideals of mutual respect and cooperation foundational to Contractualism.

Friday, May 11th, 2012, marked a turning point: I decided to skip the mandatory Friday classes, and flee to the nearest library I saw on my car ride there. With no phone nor actual insight as to how libraries worked. I fled immediately as I arrived, without a moment of hesitation I found myself in the presence of millions of manuscripts with words that aren't repetitive. Papers that don't chant, individuals whom have the option to pick and choose which book that best represents their intuition towards a certain "new light." Even if it's just for a moment, it was readily made available to them, to everyone, to me. My journey within 'the Institution' illustrates the real-world application of Divine Command Theory and Contractualism. The Institution, rooted in this theory, emphasized strict obedience to perceived divine commands, often at the expense of personal autonomy. Not to mention that this perspective is not solely to congregations such as the institutions. It can be founded in merely all coercions of people in the vast expanse of people encompassing this earth. And with the age of digital identity, we can find ourselves in groups either bigger or smaller than what our mind can comprehend, and the value we input of the loss of self we shovel just to fit in, we find ourselves in a world rooted in the advertisement of your attention is our currency.

In contrast, a Contractualism perspective criticizes these practices for violating mutual respect and individual rights, as seen in my family's alienation and our eventual departure, which reflected a shift towards personal autonomy and Contractualist values. Contractualism has sharpened my understanding of ethical decision-making. Divine Theory fostered certainty but stifled critical thinking and created moral dilemmas, while Contractualism advocates for mutual respect and individual rights, promoting a more democratic approach to ethics. This reflection reveals the importance of diverse ethical perspectives in complex moral situations.

Lastly, an expanse offered from these two, the promotion of graduating from such imperatives, the creating of our own obligations to strive away from what was once perceived to us, is not needed from what stemmed by religion, etc. Our intellect can be understood in various formulations, even if it is for survival. This Kantian quote, resonated with me in that library, *"Autonomy is the ground of the dignity of human and of every rational nature,"* (Kant & Paton, 1981). As well as a verse from, *"The Prince,"* Nicola Machiavelli, "It must be understood that a prince... cannot observe all those things for which men

are esteemed, being often forced, in order to maintain the state, to act contrary to fidelity, charity, humanity, and religion. Therefore, it is necessary for him to have a mind ready to turn itself accordingly as the winds and variations of fortune force it..." (Machiavel & Périès, 2022).

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