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| Title | The fundamental structure of moral exieriences : sinful consciousness and conscience |
| Sub Title | |
| Author | 宮崎, 友愛(Miyazaki, Tomoe) |
| Publisher | 三田哲學會 |
| Publication year | 1965 |
| Jtitle | 哲學 No.46 (1965. 2) ,p.D13- D13 |
| JaLC DOI | |
| Abstract | |
| Notes | Abstract |
| Genre | |
| URL | https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=AN00150430-00000046-0532 |

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The Fundamental Structure of Moral Experiences

—Sinful Consciousness and Conscience—

Tomoe Miyazaki

We usually find morality in the dynamic relations between the socially-and-historically-established rules and the call from our own internal deep ground. And we find also that the call from our own internal ground functions as our voice of conscience and imposes upon us those moral ideals (values) which we are obliged to realize for ourselves. When we particularly concern this part of moral experience and specify it, we have here a theory of value in ethics.

Now, we cannot realize our moral ideals without our action. Therefore, as one of the fundamental structures of moral experiences, we have to discuss the structure of action by which we actively realize our moral ideals in our practical situations. Furthermore, our moral action is required to become habitual; in other words, we have to be habituated to our moral doing. Thus, when we are particularly concerned about the structure of habituation of moral action, we have here a theory of virtue in ethics.

Now, our moral action implies our self-determination which cannot be made without our own freedom. And our freedom of existence has to presuppose our possibility which we cannot anticipate. In other words, we have to admit that, as Jaspers says, "man is the being which is beyond what he knows."

Thus, the fundamental subject of ethics is attempt to build up the new world of morality by urging us as existence to listen to the call from our own internal ground and by making us conscious of ourselves as the free creative subjectivity.

Now, it seems to me that we find in our sinful consciousness the clearest example of our unique moral experience, that is, the call from our internal ground, which blends all moral principles together. The present treatise analyses our sinful consciousness, or our call of conscience, and tries to approach the ultimate in morality from the viewpoint of existential philosophy.