

MORAL CONFESSION

Defining Moral Confession

In order to define the concept of moral confession one needs to consider the meaning of both words which constitutes this concept. This is due to the fact that no definition for this concept is available in literature.

The term moral is defined in the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary as "based on your own sense of what is right and fair not on legal rights or duties" and as "following the standard of behaviour considered acceptable and right by most people".

The term confession refers to any statement whether it is oral or written, made by an individual in which the individual acknowledges that he/she has committed an offence or made an error. (Kassin, 2011)

By considering the definitions of both these terms one can say that moral confession refers to the admission of guilt based on your own sense of what is right and fair as well as based on the standards of behaviour considered acceptable and right by most people and not based on any legal rights or duties.

An example of a platform where one can engage in moral confession in South Africa is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. During the apartheid era many people contributed to the violence and human rights abuses due to the fact that it was instituted by law and was therefore not illegal but only immoral. After 1994's election South Africa became a democratic state and the long road to healing and reconciliation started and in an attempt by the Government of National Unity to help citizens deal with all the events during the Apartheid era the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was constituted. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission provides citizens with the opportunity to confess all of their wrongdoings, most of these wrongdoings were immoral and not illegal at the time and they were also considered acceptable and right by the majority group of that time. These confessions can be seen as moral confessions. (Unknown, n.d.)

Therapeutic Value of Moral Confession in Dealing with Psychopathology

It is perceived that in certain instances confessions are needed in order for an individual to be formally released from guilt, to be socially accepted, to feel free or to improve the mental or physical health of the individual. Based on this one can understand where the urge to confess originated. It must also be kept in mind that in certain instances, such as when confessing to a crime, the individual may experience personally damaging consequences instead of benefits as mentioned earlier. (Kassin, 2011)

It was uncovered by anthropologists that people from all over the world held the conviction that confessing is good for the person as whole, it was such an important conviction for some cultures that special confession ceremonies were held. In more modern times various studies were conducted to investigate the efforts confessing and opening up had on the well-being of the individual. All the results speak off better overall health of the individuals who practiced in these research endeavours. People also experienced lighter moods, better physical and mental health. It was also found that keeping secrets is very stressful and can even lead to a temporary decrease in the activity of certain immune cells. Both Freud and Breuer discovered that confession had a positive effort on the mood of the individual. In fact, these findings led to Freud's Psychoanalysis which now is the foundation of many modern psychotherapies. (Kassin, 2011)

From the register of reconciliation found on the website of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission it is evident that people still feel the effect of Apartheid. Many of those who benefitted from this system suffers from guilt and other psychological problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder. The platform set by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission gave such individuals the chance to confess and by doing so experience the benefits of confession and opening up. In practice moral confession would have had a bigger impact as this will give the therapist a better insight into the person of the individual and all the things in his unconscious. (Unknown, n.d.) (Kassin, 2011) (Leiper & Maltby, 2004)

Before treatment and interventions can be initiated a person needs to consult with a professional. This is not always an easy task as people in general find it difficult to admit and acknowledge that they have a problem and need help to address it. Individuals furthermore also gets very upset and angry when they are approached with questions with regards to their mental health. The first step involves identification and this step various questions are asked in order to get the necessary information in order to make a diagnosis. The behaviour of the individual is examined and the therapist seeks to identify the behaviour which are not normal. The value of moral confession in this regard is that individuals will feel at ease to come forward and not deny their existence. This will be of great advantage to the dealing of psychopathologies. (Smith, 2013)

The real value of confession is that it provides the therapist with a broader spectrum of information about the client, such as his or her historical antecedents and the unwelcome change of circumstances the individual endured, so that the helper can make a recommendation which considered the entire context of the client. Yet again this may be of great value in the South African context due to the change in circumstances all the citizens had to deal with. (Hymer)

Conclusion

Confession in general has been found to bring about the development of self-identity as well as to strengthen one's absolute relations. Thus it is not simply a process whereby one get the opportunity to discharge your emotions but it is in fact a process whereby the individual takes responsibility and makes declarations with regards to this. There are real value in confession as numerous studies found that those whom engage in confession are both reformed and redeemed opposed to being destroyed as the individuals who decided to conceal their guiltiness and faults. Therefore it can be said that confession may bring about the feeling of purification and clearing of the mind causing the mind to return to a state of greater integrity. (Hymer) (Leiper & Maltby, 2004)

References

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