Abstract

Herein is the project entitled “Two Philosophical Views upon Morality and Religion”. The content of this project will include an introduction to the two philosophers, Immanuel Kant and Henri Bergson, which is followed by a close account of their ideas upon morality and religion in Kant’s works, The Critique of Pure Reason and The Critique of Practical Reason, and Bergson’s The Two Sources of Morality and Religion. Furthermore, there will be a discussion of the major differences and similarities between Kant’s and Bergson’s philosophy of morality and religion, which is followed by a conclusion of the project.
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Introduction
Living in a constantly changing and more global society, where distances between cultures and nations become ever smaller, we are continuously trying to find ourselves as individual beings. It can be a life long journey for us humans to find our place within society and the rules that follow, when at the same time wanting to advocate our own autonomy and will. Morality has always been an intensively debated issue within philosophy, where Immanuel Kant has been one of the most influential thinkers within this topic. The issue of morality still exists today, especially concerning the question of morality’s conflict with one’s autonomy in relation to the laws giving by society. Does this then imply that society’s necessity of citizen’s participation limits the autonomy of the individual? Who actually decides what is morally right or wrong, and what exactly can be defined as morality? There are many questions to be considered. Throughout time religion has played a large role concerning the question of what can be considered morally right or wrong. As a result religion has often attempted to set a morally good example for humans to follow. But is religion really necessary in regards to morality? And what other concepts are necessary for the individual’s moral judgment? Humans posses intelligence and consequently have the ability to reason. To act morally, one necessarily has to have the ability to understand the consequences of an action, subsequently one uses reason. But how is reason to be considered an important factor in the matter of religion? And is there a genuine connection between morality, reason and religion?

This project aims at analyzing and discussing Immanuel Kant and Henri Bergson’s views upon morality and religion. These two philosophers are different in several ways, and it is our intention to see if there is a relation between their views upon morality and religion. It is of particular interest to discover the role of reason in Bergson’s approach to morality and religion, knowing that Kant’s a priori methodology is completely depending on the rational being’s ability to reason. It is also interesting to note how they differ - not only academically, but also in terms of their cultural and historical background. Despite of these facts, our main focus will be on their philosophy of morality and religion. We will use their major works, such as The Critique of Pure Reason and The Critique of Practical Reason by Immanuel Kant and The Two sources of Morality and Religion by Henri Bergson, in order to compare, analyze and discuss the two philosophical views upon morality and religion.

Motivation
From the start we were all very interested in focusing on the topics of morality and religion, and furthermore in discovering the relation between the two concepts. We initiated the project by looking further into the works of Immanuel Kant and Henri Bergson, since it was clear from the beginning that both philosophers dealt with morality and religion quite differently. Even though the philosophers, particularly Kant, were before our time, their themes and not a least their books are still widely discussed and relevant in regards to the ongoing debate of morality and religion. These were all aspects that contributed to the motivation of writing this project.
Problem Formulation

Research Question

With respect to their philosophy of morality and religion, in which ways and why, do Immanuel Kant and Henri Bergson differ, if at all?

Sub-questions

• What are the primary ideas of Kant’s moral philosophy?
• What are the primary ideas of Kant’s philosophy of religion?
• How is Kant’s moral philosophy connected to his notion of religion?
• What are the primary ideas of Bergson’s moral philosophy?
• What are the primary ideas of Bergson’s philosophy of religion?
• How is Bergson’s moral philosophy connected to his notion of religion?
• How does the concept of reason influence both Kant and Bergson’s philosophy of morality and religion?

Dimensions

We plan to cover the dimension of Science and Philosophy, since we are focusing on two influential philosophers’ views upon morality and religion.

Methodology

We have commenced the project by giving an introduction to why morality and religion has been so intensively debated throughout history.

Hereafter we will provide an analysis of Kant’s moral philosophy and philosophy of religion, followed by an analysis of Bergson’s perception of the same subject matters. In order to analyze Kant’s philosophy we will include primary literature such as The Critique of Pure Reason and The Critique of Practical Reason. When analyzing Bergson we will primarily use The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, furthermore we will be using different readers to get a good understanding of both philosophers’ concepts. These concepts will be the tools for our discussion, provided by both philosophers within their study of morality and religion. Consequently we will aim at discussing in which ways the philosophers differ in means of their approach, as well as revealing possible similarities.

Delimitations

In our project we have chosen to focus on morality and religion, with the main focus on Immanuel Kant’s The Critique of Pure Reason, The Critique of Practical Reason and Henri Bergson’s The Two Sources of Morality and Religion. When studying the subject matters of morality and religion, numerous as well as complex questions arise. Just within the field of philosophy of religion important questions have aroused in many different areas such as metaphysics, epistemology and moral philosophy. Nonetheless, we have chosen only to compare these philosophers’ views upon morality and religion, and our main concern will thus not be morality and religion in general.

At first we also wanted to add a history dimension to our project, as the Kant and Bergson stem from two different time periods, we found that it would be interesting to compare the two philosophers’ time periods its
influences on their works. The purpose of making this comparison was to see whether these aspects played an essential role in forming the philosopher’s ideas or not. It was also of interest to see if their historical background had an impact upon their different conceptions of morality and religion. However, after reading more of their works, we did not find this comparison essential for the project. Instead we choose to commit our entire focus to discuss their different ideas of morality and religion. Nevertheless we will not give a critical examination of their philosophies, in terms of validity in regards to their philosophical claims.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

Immanuel Kant was born in the East Prussian city of Königsberg in 1724. At the year of eight, he attended the Collegium Fridericianum, a school that was highly influenced by Pietism, which meant that physics were only acceptable as long as their results did not undermine the Bible. The students were in general subject to very strict schedules and strong discipline – what Kant would later recall as the “slavery of his youth” (SEP), and what clearly had a strong influence on his philosophical approach to religion later in his career. After eight years at Collegium Fridericianum, Kant went to the University Of Königsberg where he spent his early academic years studying philosophy, mathematics and physics. After graduating in 1755, Kant stayed at the university for almost his entire life, attracting an increasing amount of students due to his radical approach to the study of religion. However, his “unorthodox” teachings entailed political pressure on Kant, which eventually meant that he was banned from teaching and writing on religious subjects by King Fredrich William II – an order which he obeyed until the death of the king in 1797.

A Priori Methodology

Kant preferred to have his philosophical inquiries based upon a theoretical thesis, rather than a practical investigation, a so called *a priori* methodology. One could compare the approach with a "thesis", thus in an oversimplified definition, it is non-empirical at its first stage, and independent of experience. This has been Kant's preferred methodology where the truth of statements can be judged without initiating a larger investigation, namely by the use of logic and common sense. According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (SEP), the mathematical
calculation rules can be used as an example, or the statement that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. It is however important to note the difference between \textit{a priori} and \textit{a posteriori} (methodology). The latter being the opposite of Kant’s preferred methodology, which could roughly be explained as having truth based upon experience, such as empirical studies and research. According to \textit{Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy}, Kant offers several reasons for choosing an \textit{a priori} methodology, which he argues for repeatedly.

Kant conceives ethics as being constructed of our moral concepts, and that an understanding our moral concepts requires a beforehand analysis of how the different concepts, such as duty, reason, good will and the \textit{categorical imperative}, are related to one another other. So taking that an analysis of concepts is \textit{a priori}, the ethics being analyzed would also be \textit{a priori}. Kant further urges us to understand the logical reason of approaching issues in ethics \textit{a priori} by using the ability to choose between reason and instinct, by arguing that an \textit{a posteriori} methodology would only tell us what we actually do, and not what we must, which would be the aim of an \textit{a priori} methodology (SEP). All in all, one must follow Kant’s line of argumentation and reasoning in order to give in to the premises of which he bases his study.

\textbf{Important Concepts within Kant’s Moral Philosophy:}

\textbf{Reason}

An essential part of Kant’s moral philosophy, and what he is famous for bringing into the field of morality, is the concept of reason – the human being’s ability to reason, and thus its ability to control its instinct. Kant’s entire moral philosophy revolves around the concept that, what differ humans from animals is the intellect, and thus ability to think rationally, as in being able to choose whether or not to give in to a momentarily desire. Acting according to one’s reason is the main stepping stone for the \textit{categorical imperative}, the latter being an action that obeys a universal law. A counter-example to the categorical imperative could be the following:

A son decides to kill his father. This is still a rational action, but obviously one based a momentarily desire rather than reason, and thus not a categorical imperative, since the action of killing people cannot be a part of a universal law, because this would allow everybody to kill each other. This is thereby only a \textit{hypothetical imperative}, in this case, a person deciding to kill his father in order to obtain revenge. Hypothetical imperatives, as opposed to the categorical imperative, are not necessarily moral actions, but more a concept which describes what one might act upon, based on one’s personal interest in archiving an end.

\textbf{The Categorical Imperative}

The categorical imperative is thus a notion that has the individual’s ability to reason as the main premise, and it is perhaps one of Kant’s most genuine and widespread philosophical ideas of morality. The categorical requires you to:

“\textit{Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it becomes a universal law}” (SEP)

This means that in order to suffice the categorical imperative, you have to act in a collectively accepted way, hence an action that can be applied
under the formulated circumstances. However, for the categorical imperative to work it must not use people as ways of obtaining a certain goal, in other words, people can never be used as means, but only as ends in themselves (SEP). We will illustrate this with the following example:

If John decides to do something in favour of his friend Bill, then Bill would in this case be an end. John has so far been acting in accordance to the categorical imperative. However, if John decides to kill his other friend Jamie in order to help Bill, whom Bill owes money; he is violating the Categorical Imperative, by using Jamie as a means of obtaining an end (the end being helping Bill).

In order to understand exactly how a morally right action is defined according to Kant, scholars who have studied Kant’s Categorical Imperatives have summarized it into a four-step process; (SEP).

1. Construct a maxim that works as a guideline for acting in accordance with your own reason.
2. Apply this maxim as a universal law, which must be a followed by all rational beings, as was it a natural law to act in the way you propose under the specific circumstances.
3. Reflect upon the consequence of the stated maxim instated as a law of nature, and whether it is conceivable or not.
4. Imagine yourself in the situation of an agent bound to live by your maxim - would you then, according to your on rationality, will to act in a world governed by your maxim.

If your can fulfil these four requirements, then your action can according to Kant be considered to be a morally responsible action, and thus qualifies as a categorical imperative.

Duty

According to Kant our motivation to commit an action of duty is due our instinctive respect of laws. Duties are therefore actions based upon an integrated law, a code, which responds to law in any layer, be it domestic, regional or national. There is however a consideration of personal conflict, if the law that must be obeyed clashes with your own personal values and principles. (SEP)

Imagine the following situation. You are in a nightclub and act according to the normative codex - you dance, socialize, fool around with random strangers and get into a few a fights – the usual night club behaviour for most people. However, you might choose not to drink alcohol due to your personal beliefs and values. Thereby part of the night club codex of behaviour, in this case the drinking culture, clashes with a personal maxim that you normally act upon.

The point is to show that our respect for laws work as a guidance upon practical affairs, but are only relevant as long as they do not violate the laws of our own practical reason. One could say that duty constitutes a moral obligation, a commitment to moral law.
**Autonomy**

At the core of Kant’s moral philosophy, we have the concept of autonomy. In this specific context it is to be understood as the liberty of the rational human being’s will, which are attached to two terminologies of autonomy, namely the negative and positive. Freedom is in the sense of negative autonomy under as the ability to free ourselves from outer factors’ influence on our moral judgment, whilst freedom in the sense of positive autonomy is to be able to choose our own willing. (Luchte, 2007: 24-25)

We have tried to simplify the conception of autonomy with the following example:

Imagine a man sitting in his car, waiting for the lights to turn green. Suddenly he is enraged by a honking car behind him, and instinctively goes out of his own car and hits the person who was honking at him.

This would not fit Kant’s terminology of free will, due to the fact that he is enraged by an outside factor, which influences his control in willing to hurt the person, which the rational human being would find immoral after coming to his senses. In this way, the concept of autonomy and duty are both related to the practice of willing an action.

**Summum Bonum**

Kant defined the *summum bonum* as a product of virtue along with happiness, with the major emphasis on the former, namely virtue. *Summum* is Latin for either the *supreme* or *perfect*, while *bonum* simply means *good*. Within Kantianism the most commonly used term is the *highest good*, however, we will to stick to the former Latin term, as it has been a vividly discussed philosophical concept since the Ancients.

“Kant argued that this Highest Good for Humanity is complete moral virtue together with complete happiness, the former being the condition of our deserving the latter.” (SEP)

In order to understand the above mentioned quote properly, it is important to clarify Kant’s notion of happiness. Kant does not define happiness in terms of pleasure, but as “the satisfaction with one’s whole existence” and regards it a *naturzweck*, a natural purpose, of every rational human being:

“To be happy is necessarily the demand of every rational but finite being…” (Kant, 2004: 23)

Furthermore, no matter how convenient and obvious the notion of happiness may seem, it is not the main postulate of the *summum bonum*. In *The Critique of Pure Practical Reason*, Kant criticizes the Ancients’ approach to the balancing *virtue* and *happiness*, and argues that *virtue* has to be the primary requisite, since it is the *supreme condition of all that can appear to us desirable* (Kant, 2004: 118).

“If a man is virtuous without being conscious of his integrity in every action, he will certainly not enjoy life.” (Kant, 2004: 124)

By this Kant attempts to optimize the Ancient Schools of Philosophy’s approach to the perception of the *summum bonum*, by raising awareness to the importance of the individual’s ability to see the virtue of his moral
actions. Kant argues that the *summum bonum* furthermore consist of three elements, namely *freedom, immortality of the soul* and *the existence of God*, which we will devote our attention to in the following pages.

**Freedom**

Other than *freedom* for the individual, the **autonomy** that, as we mentioned in the previous chapter, allows us to free our moral judgment from the influence of outside factors, Kant’s *summum bonum* consists of two other postulates, *immortality of the soul* and *the existence of God* (Kant, 2004: 143-144). These three elements together indicate the introduction of religion into Kantian morality. Freedom, or autonomy, is a necessity in order to act according to the categorical imperative, since one must will the end. In this way the limits of human reasoning influence the freedom of the rational being. If one were to consider a rational being of omniscient character, his omniscience would necessarily limit his actions. According to Heiner Bielefeldt, professor of philosophy at the University of Bremen, “if the will were to depend on the expectation that virtue will finally receive its due reward, be it in this world or in the hereafter, then the incentive of action would indeed be *heteronomous* not autonomous” (Bielefeldt, 2003: 157)

**The Immortality of the Soul**

The first of the two presuppositions, as Kant terms it, is the immortality of the soul. It is defined as the supposition of an endless duration of the existence and personality of the same rational being (Kant, 2004: 130), meaning that the individual is enabled to see an endless succession of his/her moral actions, by supposing, as in believing in, eternity, as in an endless duration. These are considered the characteristics of the infinite being, the one to whom the condition of time is not an issue. On the other hand, the best case scenario for the finite being is limited to experience a progression from the lower to higher degrees of moral perfection (Kant, 2004: 131).

**The Existence of God**

In his book *Symbolic Representation in Kant’s Practical Philosophy*, Heiner Bienefeldt emphasizes how Kant has a radically different approach to proving the existence of God, namely by emphasizing the practical necessity of God in connection to morality.

“It is the inner moral consciousness, not the external order of nature, that provides the ultimate basis for a “proof” of God’s existence that itself therefore cannot claim the status of scientific cognition but, instead, belongs to a practical metaphysic.” (Bienefeldt, 2003: 165)

By this he explains how Kant uses God in relation to the cornerstone of his moral philosophy, namely the *summum bonum*. The necessity of the concept of a deity is due to the rational being’s desire to constitute a higher reason for living in accordance to categorical imperative. This is what Kant calls the expectation of *a cause adequate to this effect*, the cause being God and the effect being the universal law (Kant, 2004: 133). Inevitably this position will lead the individual to expect happiness as a consequence of a virtuous way of life, however true morality can only spring from an autonomous will, and therefore virtue must be the primary factor of moral conduct, as explained previously in the construction of the
summum bonum. To accept the condition of the *summum bonum* will thereby entail that the individual is submitted to faith. Kant’s controversial view upon the existence of God within the field of science builds upon mere reason and can therefore be explained through means of his moral philosophy. Kant’s explanation of the existence of God therefore necessarily requires the individual have faith, as he writes in the Preface to the second edition of the Critique of Pure Reason (1787), “I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith.” (SEP)

One might notice that Kant neither tries to prove or counter prove the existence of God, but merely supposes the rationality and logic of His existence. As opposed to other philosophers before his time, Kant does not attempt to prove the existence of God using for example the *cosmological argument*, that is, that every event has a cause, and thus also the universe. However, it is important to note that even though Kant’s critical point of view dismantles the arguments of previous philosophers to a certain extent, it also provides a valuable account of how the affirmation of God influences moral endeavor. Since complete morality might not be possible to obtain in this life, the *moral faith* becomes an essential premise for the individual’s effort in seeking the *summum bonum* (SEP, Appiah 2003: 317-322).

From a moral perspective, the existence of God thereby accompanies the rational necessity of *summum bonum*. To sum up, the prerequisites of the latter are thus:

- Freedom – since autonomy is a necessity of true morality
- Immortality of the Soul – in order to see an endless succession of one’s moral actions
- The Existence of God – since the individual expects a cause adequate to the effect

The *summum bonum* is then only practically possible on the supposition of the immortality of the soul; consequently this immortality is connected to the moral law, as a postulate of pure practical reason.

Until Kant introduces the *summum bonum*, he has been able to deal with moral philosophy on a strictly logical level, without the involvement of any religion or metaphysical reference. However, his answer to the question of why we should care to act morally at all is very much in need of a Supreme Being. Nevertheless, he fills the gap by bringing in the concept of *summum bonum*, which ultimately leads to the incorporation of religion. It seems that Kant's ultimate answer to why the individual should act according to its reason, is the fact that we, as rational beings strive for moral perfection, despite being unattainable in practice. Thus, by acting virtuous and benevolent, the individual reaches its highest attainable point by the immortality of the soul. Complete virtue in this world, therefore gives makes the individual worthy of happiness in the hereafter, but only on grounds of acceptance of a condition, namely the acknowledgement of a Supreme Being. Morality can therefore also be
considered as the set of guidelines that describes how we can become worthy of happiness – and not how we make ourselves happy. However, it is important to keep in mind that the theory of moral law functions independently of our motivation or hope of gaining back what we have given as virtuous beings. Just as the principle of charity, we do not expect anything in return, at least not in this world, but truly one has taken a step further to make himself worthy of happiness in the hereafter. Nevertheless the logic of acting in accordance to the categorical imperative still remains, so if we were to use the above mentioned example, one can still state that “people who are extremely fortunate should occasionally share their fortune with those who are less fortunate”\(^1\). If we run the maxim through the four conditions of the categorical imperative, we can assume that this could pass as a categorical imperative. Consequently we can conclude that the motivation itself for acting according to the categorical imperative, besides the logical side of it, is the only factor which is in need of the *summum bonum* to explain itself.

It is now possible to conclude that the genuine perception of happiness does not entirely cover the exact notion which Kant wanted to present, since happiness contributes to a false understanding of the rational being acting according to the categorical imperative, in order to obtain happiness in the mortal world. For the sake of understanding the notion of **being worthy of happiness**, one could draw a parallel to a well-known concept, namely the notion of benevolence promoted through Christianity, “(...)Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”\(^2\), which encourages us to live like the good Samaritan. The shift from morality to faith, may have led the reader to reflect upon the influence of religion on Kant’s moral philosophy, however Kant does not base his morality on Christianity, but merely illustrates his concept of morality through means of religion. Happiness is to be considered as a second element of the *summum bonum* (Kant, 1788: 127), which therefore means that the rational being, who has accepted the categorical imperative, can obtain happiness after reaching *summum bonum* by acting virtuously and “(…) only in such a way that it is the morally conditioned, but necessary consequence of the former (…)”\(^3\) (Kant, 1788:127), which is why religion can not be the basis of morality.

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\(^1\) Note that this is an everyday life statement constituted by the authors, and not a reference.

\(^2\) The Bible, Romans 13:9 - King James version

\(^3\) The former being the *summum bonum*. 
Henri Bergson (1859-1941)

Henri Bergson was one of the most influential French philosophers during the 20th century. Bergson reached a cult-like status during his lifetime, but his influence decreased remarkably after his death. However, since the 1990s there has been a reawakening interest in Bergson’s philosophy especially due to Gilles Deleuze’s book “Bergsonism” from 1966 (SEP). Bergson first studied mathematics, but eventually chose to study in the humanities department at the École Normale, where he graduated in 1881. In 1928, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature for his book Creative Evolution. The Two Sources of Morality and Religion was published in 1932, which started new debates and confusion about Bergson’s former philosophy and not at least on his religious orientation (SEP).

Moral Obligation

In the first chapter of The Two Sources of Morality and Religion entitled Moral Obligation, Bergson starts out his work by contemplating on how humans since birth are following the demands and prohibitions from their parents and teachers. He points out how children hardly ever question these regulations⁴, as it becomes a habit to follow one’s parents and teachers, because of the authority we perceive them to have. Later in life humans will come to realize that behind these demands from our parents and teachers lies society, that lays “pressure on us through them” (Bergson, 1977: 9). Further from this point, Bergson sees to compare this thought with the cells of an organism. Each cell has its certain hierarchic place, where it seeks to maintain its given discipline and habits “for the greatest good of the organism” (Bergson, 1977: 9). Though what separates the almost unbreakable laws of an organism to that of a human society is that the latter is made up by free wills. If these wills then are to be organized they will more likely resemble the appearance of an organism. Social life will in this sense be “a system of more or less deeply rooted habits, corresponding to the needs of the community” (Bergson, 1977: 10). These habits are both from command and obedience, and with these habits come a sense of obligation, what Bergson terms social obligation. The pressure from social obligation is of great power, and each of these different habits are enforced upon the members of society to communicate a social necessity. Though, why should one follow these demands from society, instead of one’s own desires and fantasies? Bergson argues how a person, ready to follow his own way instead of considering his fellow-men, is likely to be dragged back by social forces soon after. However, this sense of necessity together with the consciousness of the possibility to break it is what he calls an obligation. (Bergson, 1977: 14) While man belongs to a society, Bergson upholds that man also belongs to himself. Individuals are in life in interdependence with others, but “obligation, which we look upon as a bond between men, first binds us to ourselves” (Bergson, 1977: 15). In order to uphold social solidarity among men, a special social ego is to be added to the individual self, and to nurture this ego is in fact the core of the individual’s obligation to society. However, man in society has a social conscience, where the “verdict of conscience is the verdict which would be given by the social self” (Bergson, 1977: 17). The individual is aware of the rules laid down by society, and if these are somehow broken, it would cause moral distress in the relationship between the individual and society. Additionally individuals have other factors that connect them

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⁴ Remember, we are talking about 1932, not 2008 ☺
with society, such as a family, a job, a sense of nationality and more, to where they have a social obligation as well. This when the daily routines drawn up by society show, and where most people merely aim at fulfilling these duties and tasks, without being entirely conscious of it. It is only when obedience is seen as an overcoming of the self that the consciousness arises.

Furthermore, Bergson implies how one’s ability to reason is used stick to one’s duties and resist one’s own desires and needs. “An intelligent being generally exerts his influence on himself through the medium of intelligence” (Bergson, 1977: 22). Though, one thing is that reason is used as a tool to get back to obligation, this, Bergson believes, does not necessarily entail that obligation derives from reason or rationality. To sum up, the totality of obligation is the collected amount of obligations, each one having its force on the will in the form of a habit, where all obligations work together as the pressure imposed upon the ordinary, moral conscience.

Bergson goes further to compare obligation in its basic state with the form of a “categorical imperative”, (“how slightly Kantian!”) (Bergson, 1977: 25). He includes the saying: “You must because you must” (Bergson, 1977: 25), an order humans can come to face in life in many different ways, standing in front of the obligations of life. To get back to the act of reasoning, Bergson implies that instinct in this case comes before reason. When man reflects upon his situation, he will not contemplate “enough to seek for reasons” (Bergson, 1977: 26) - an absolutely categorical imperative will in this way be instinctive. However, while the obligations of human society together with obligations in general can be seen to lead back to instinct, Bergson claims that it would be a mistake not to include intelligence, which is what separates humans from animals. While both species are born with instinct, humans have also have intelligence from the hands of nature. Therefore human beings can ponder about their own situation, whereas for example a bee will not reflect upon its work in the bee-hive, as it is a natural instinct for it to work for the greatest good.

However there has been a change through time from the primitive societies to the society of today, especially with the accumulated amount of habits and knowledge civilized man has in present time. Nonetheless, they still have one great similarity: They are both closed societies: “Their essential character is none the less to include at any moment a certain number of individuals, and exclude others” (Bergson, 1977: 30). When a person has a moral obligation to its society, it is a closed morality for that specific society, and not for others. One can soon think of war time, where individuals fight for the maintenance of the social cohesion in their society, and tries to protect themselves against others. While this social instinct in social obligation is not fairly changeable, a closed society is still large (Bergson, 1977: 32). It can be changed from the closed to the open society, from the closed to the open morality.

**Open Morality**

To go from the closed to the open morality is to take a new path away from the pressures of society, towards a new and different morality embracing all of humanity. In all aspects of time, Bergson finds that some outstanding people have outlived this morality, by turning their faces to that “complete morality” or “absolute morality” (Bergson, 1977: 34). It is thereby a morality focusing on the human, whereas the first morality is
This shift from the first to the second is “not one of degree but of kind” (Bergson, 1977: 35). Individuals will not reach humanity just by thinking that he loves other societies or would like to, as these thoughts will remain thoughts. The real open morality or open soul will on the other hand be able to love all of humanity. It is an unconditional and self-sufficient love that does need to be aimed at a specific entity, as it is already loving. The attitude acquired here calls for an effort, an effort that only by emotion can guide the will beyond the constraints of social pressure. The emotions that men have from nature, based on their instinct, are limited to only act according to their own needs. Emotions in the open morality are instead genuine inventions, “at the origin of which there has always been man” (Bergson, 1977: 41). Bergson goes further to describe two different kinds of emotions, one happening in the closed obligation, the other in the open. The first emotion, that needs an object for it to be affected, is what Bergson calls the infra-intellectual, whereas the other is called supra-intellectual, an emotion already filled with ideas and sensations (Bergson, 1977: 44). The open soul will thus want to act according to these emotions and seeks to be positively inspired by them, and will not see them as forced restrictions from outside, but something it naturally wants to hold on to. To sum up, to the new morality “there is the emotion, which develops as an impetus in the realm of the will, and as an explicative representation in that of intelligence” (Bergson, 1977: 49).

Mystics, saints and formers of religions are some of those exceptional men that throughout history have conquered the constraints of nature and pressure from the closed societies, and thereby lifted humanity to a new fate. Humans have been and are following these men, whom they look upon as heroes. To once again light up the difference between the closed and the open morality, one could call the first pressure and latter aspiration (Bergson, 1977: 50). Pressure is the picture of a society wanting to maintain social cohesion. If these obligations are accomplished it would most likely cause the emotion of pleasure; “Morality of aspiration on the contrary, implicitly contains the feeling of progress” (Bergson, 1977: 51). Between the first and the second morality is the distance between rest and motion, where the latter is seeking for this motion, which is seen as a transition stage. When the soul goes from being closed to being open, the closed morality will not absorbed by the new morality. Rather, it has instead been transformed - the new morality has gone beyond intelligence. To find out where this new morality derives from, one has to go back to the evolution of life and the intention nature had with humans. Nature gave the individual intelligence to separate them from animals, yet nature still intended man to be sociable, and for the necessary maintenance of social cohesion habits were formed, which shaped the instinct. Thus the original moral construction was made for closed societies (Bergson, 1977: 56). Bergson further claims how nature could thereby not have foreseen how intelligence would develop, but by no means have wanted it to cause danger to the original structure of morality. As the closed societies should remain in the closed circle, nature would be surprised how some individuals have gone beyond nature to broaden “his social solidarity into the brotherhood of man” (Bergson, 1977: 57). Intelligence has developed as a helping hand to free humans from restrictions of nature, to express “nature as constituting itself anew” (Gutting, 2001: 78). This is the work of a man’s genius.
Justice and Reason

Justice is one of the moral ideas that have developed in history caused, by the creative effort of exceptional men, with a transition from relative to absolute justice. The relative justice takes form in a society, being one obligation out of many that serves social cohesion. It does not have a specific privilege, or more specifically a concern towards the individual. It is due to Christianity, Bergson believes, that there has been a transition from the relative or closed to the absolute or open justice. It is precisely these exceptional men, who have introduced the idea of ‘universal brotherhood’ (Bergson, 1977: 78). They have through “an effort of creation” with the endless power of love seized to take justice toward freedom and equality. The moral progress is to be explained as:

“(…) moral creators who see in their mind’s eye a new social atmosphere, an environment in which life would be more worth living, I mean a society such, that if men once tried it, they would refuse to go back to the old state of things” (Bergson, 1977: 80)

To return to the act of reasoning, Bergson claims that “moral activity in a civilized society is essentially rational” (Bergson, 1977: 81). Certain standards have been set in society for individuals to follow, whereby they will use their reason to find it rational to follow these guidelines. Even for the open morality, there will always be this fundamental framework for pure obligation, which is the obligation deriving from the side of nature linking humans to their society. However, the open morality in an open society will still be embracing all of humanity, by going further than the pressure of the closed society, to a new morality of aspiration. This aspiration is an ideal, Bergson believes. The mystics, who through time have exalted societies and given them new ideals and perspectives to the world, have given rise to a two-sided morality of the civilized humanity in present time: The old system of “impersonal social requirements” together with awareness about the best there is in humanity, shown by the mystics (Bergson, 1977: 84). This organization of moral life, Bergson finds to be self-sufficient and rational (Bergson, 1977: 85). But as mentioned before, obligation and morality do not necessarily derive from pure reason. Though many philosophers before Bergson have taken the view of morality developed in reason, he finds this explanation unlikely. For him “real obligation is already there, and whatever reason impresses upon it assumes naturally an obligatory character” (Bergson, 1977: 89). The concept of real obligation is made in society, according to how much the individual partakes in the protection of the social cohesion. Reason will from there “more or less rediscover morality” (Bergson, 1977: 89). The way individuals reason will be an outcome of society, where the act of reasoning has then been socialized.

The mystics who have been the only ones capable of transforming morality from the closed to the open have made a creative evolution, where each one with a love so great and with “an entirely new emotion, capable of transposing human life into another tone” (Bergson, 1977: 99). However, while the mystics are real living creatures in the world, Bergson does not know whether there exists an open society at all:

“Now a mystic society, embracing all humanity and moving, animated by a common will, towards the continually renewed creation of a more complete humanity, is no more possible of realization in the future than was the existence in the past of human societies functioning automatically and similar to animal societies. Pure aspiration is an ideal limit, just like obligation unadorned” (Bergson, 1977: 84).
Nonetheless, mystics have shown and are continuing “to draw civilized societies in their wake” (Bergson, 1977: 84).

**Static Religion**

Just as Bergson distinguishes between closed and open morality, he also distinguishes between static religion and dynamic religion. Static religion is connected to the closed morality which is present in closed society. Static religion serves as a function that will protect the “control” of society against human intelligence. Even though human society holds some similarities to those of ants and bees, where the society is based on instinct, humans differ from animals, as they have the ability to reason and question their individual place in society (Gutting, 2001: 78). This particular skill makes humans possible to break free from society and refuse to fulfill their social obligations, which society entails. According to Bergson, such refusal would however only develop either from selfishness (Bergson, 1977: 122) or from the despair that comes with the uncertainties of life and the fact that death is inevitable (Bergson, 1977: 132).

Static religion intervenes with myths about the universe and how humans fit into it. The myth-making function works by for example promising rewards or threatening humans with punishment in the afterlife and asserting that a higher “presence” is watching each of human’s actions (Bergson, 1977: 136). According to Bergson, “the pressure of instinct has given rise, within intelligence, to that form of imagination which is the myth-making function. Myth-making has but to follow its own course in order to fashion, out of the elementary personalities looming up at the outset, gods that assume more and more exalted form like those of mythology, or deities ever more degraded, such as mere spirits.” (Bergson, 1977: 164)

The ideas that are a part of the static religion and myth-making function are based on the “fabulation function”, which then creates “voluntary hallucinations” in human mind. These are images of gods and spirits, which then come to represent ideals for man to follow. These images also insure strict obedience to the closed morality and as a result insure social cohesion. In other words, right from the beginning of these beliefs, there was a defensive reaction of nature against the discouragement found in intelligence. “This reaction arouses within intelligence itself images and ideas which hold in check the depressing representation or prevent it from materializing.” (Bergson, 1977: 152) As stated above, static religion serves to ward off the dangers that could follow with human intelligence, and as a result static religion is seen as being infra-intellectual (Bergson, 1977: 186).

It must be understood that as a matter of fact, the individual and the society are interconnected. Individuals make up society, and consequently the society shapes a whole side of the individual. According to Bergson, “the individual and society thus condition each other, circle-wise.” (Bergson, 1977: 199) This circle, made by nature, can be broken once man is able to get back into the creative impetus and as a result push human nature forward instead of letting it revolve on the same spot. Once this circle is broken a new and more personal religion, namely dynamic religion, can be founded (Bergson, 1977: 199). In order to get at the very essence of religion, human must pass directly from the outer and static religion to the inner and dynamic religion.
Dynamic Religion

In the third chapter of *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Bergson outlines the concept of what he calls *dynamic religion*. In order to define the concept of dynamic religion, Bergson also takes a look at former primitive societies, as well as the ancient Greek and Roman, and furthermore draws examples to other religions, in particular Buddhism and Hinduism.

According to Bergson, whether it is static or dynamic religion, religion must be taking at its origins. Static religion was embedded in nature, whereas dynamic religion is seen as something which goes beyond nature (Bergson, 1935: 223). Bergson explains that dynamic religion consists of creativity and progress and furthermore clarifies that it is not made up by any organized set of rules. Dynamic religion is however motivated through a morality of aspiration and the divine love for human kind, compared to static religion, which is motivated through force and the fulfillment of needs. The morality, which drives dynamic religion forward, is what Bergson refers to as an *absolute morality* (Gutting, 2001: 75). Nevertheless dynamic religion must be acquired through a direct and spiritual experience of God. Hence, dynamic religion is seen as being embedded in mysticism. (Bergson, 1935: 213)

As a result, it is through this mystic experience of God that man can attain the highest stage within morality and religion. But in order to achieve the most perfect form of mysticism, practical action in the world is needed, or as Bergson phrases it, “the ultimate end of mysticism is the establishment of a contact, consequently of a partial coincidence, with the creative effort which life itself manifest. This effort is of God, if it is not God himself.” (Bergson, 1932: 221) “Consequently, dynamic religion is seen as being “supra-intellectual” (Bergson, 1935: 220). Mysticism is to be understood as the spirituality that comes with the direct experience of God – an experience of God, which is a kind of understanding that goes beyond the intellect. Ultimately true mysticism must be experienced (Bergson, 1935: 237). Mysticism often bring Eastern religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, to mind and do not strike as being naturally attached to Christianity; nevertheless mysticism is in fact at the core of Christian spirituality. Mysticism was never obtained by Greek thought, and according to Bergson it was never fully completed in Hinduism or Buddhism either:

“Neither in Greece nor in the ancient India was there complete mysticism, in the one case because the impetus was not strong enough, in the other case because it was thwarted by material conditions or by too narrow an intellectual frame.” (Bergson, 1935: 227)

However, complete mysticism would be that of action, creation and love. (Bergson, 1935: 225) Hence for Bergson there seems to be no doubt about it, “the complete mysticism is that of the great Christian mystics.” (Bergson, 1935: 227)

Unlike static religion, dynamic religion is embraced more rarely and only by a small “selected” group of religious people, whom Bergson also refers to as the great mystics. The fundamental end for dynamic religion and mysticism would be to establish the contact with such an individual, who could become a great mystic and thus be able to rise above “the limitations imposed on the species by its material nature, thus continuing and extending the divine action.” (Bergson, 1935: 221) Dynamic religion is and have been spread through the experience of these selected few religious “heroes”, as for example St. Paul, St. Teresa and not at least
Jesus Christ himself, who were all devoted to spreading the Christian faith. The great mystics also serve as role models for the society, who can help inspire others to experience true mysticism and God, as these have reached a genuine insight to God, and consequently obtained an insight to true mysticism (Bergson, 1935: 228). It must be kept in mind that it is possible to mistake true mysticism with mystic insanity. Naturally we find raptures, ecstasies and visions abnormal, and that it is also difficult to make a distinction between the abnormal and the “morbid” state of mind, but the great mystics are aware of this. Nevertheless, the mystics have been able to leave raptures and ecstasies behind, and instead reached the desired end of recognition of the human will with the divine will. The fact is that “these abnormal states, resembling morbid states, and sometimes doubtless very much akin to them, are easily comprehensible, if we only stop to think what a shock to the soul is the passing from static to the dynamic, from the closed to the open, from everyday to mystic life.” (Bergson, 1935: 229)

In order to attain this genuine understanding of true mysticism and to pass from static to dynamic religion, humans need to go through several transition phases. However close the union with God may be, it is only final if the union is total. This will happen when the fundamental division between “him who loves and him who is beloved” (Bergson, 1935: 230) is gone, and as a result God is present and happiness is unlimited. Even though the human soul, in both thought and feeling, is absorbed by God, the human will, which is seen as the essential action of the soul, remains left outside. Consequently, the union is not total and the soul is not yet divine (Bergson, 1935: 230). The soul is quite aware of this:

“(…) hence its vague disquietude, hence the agitation in repose which is the striking feature of what we call complete mysticism: it means that the impetus has acquired the momentum to go further, that ecstasy affects indeed the ability to see and to feel, but that there is, besides, the will, which itself has to find its way back to God.” (Bergson, 1935: 231)

When this ecstasy and “revelation” of mysticism has vanished, the soul is once again left alone. The soul, which for a time was used to a “dazzling light” (Bergson, 1935: 231), is now groping in the darkness of society. The soul feels that it has lost everything, but does not realize what it is about to obtain, namely insight to true mysticism. This phase is referred to as the darkest night in Christian mysticism (Bergson, 1935: 231). At this instant, the final phase, which is characterized as the great mysticism, is just about to happen. The soul now desires to become God’s instrument. The soul is at this moment aware of the importance of throwing off anything, which is not pure enough for God to use. At this stage it is God, who is acting through the soul – this makes the union total as well as final. The soul has as a result become a superabundance of life (Bergson, 1935: 232). The love, which the soul is now concerned about, is not only the love for God, but the love of God for all humans. The soul, through God, loves all mankind with an open and divine love (Bergson, 1935: 233). This kind of mystic love for humanity is not to be found in the senses or in the mind, but it lies at the root of feeling and reason (Bergson, 1935: 234). In order for mysticism to transform humanity, a part of it must be passed on from one man to another, generation after generation. Bergson therefore presents two very different methods, which are used in the transformation process.
For Bergson, religion is meant to be absorbed intellectually, on the other hand, mysticism must be experienced, as it would mean absolutely nothing to the human, who had not had a spiritual experience of God (Bergson, 1935: 237). Consequently, the first method finds it necessary to strengthen the intellectualization of humans to such an extent that “the simple tool would give place to a vast system of machinery such as might set human activity at liberty.” (Bergson, 1935: 235) This liberty, supported by a political or social organization, would make sure to be applied to its true object. However, this method is more complex than just anticipated and also seen as dangerous, because as it would develop, it could turn against mysticism. Thus, by using this method, there would be certain risks that should be taken, implicating that for example:

“(…) an activity of a superior kind, which to be operative requires one of a lower order, must call forth this activity, or a least permit it to function, if necessary, even at the cost of having to defend itself against it” (Bergson, 1935: 236)

The second method consists of passing on the mystic impetus to a few privileged souls, which all together could form a spiritual society. With the help of the exceptionally gifted souls, the spiritual societies might then multiply. This would mean that the “impetus would be preserved and continued until such time as a profound change in the material conditions imposed on humanity by nature should permit, in spiritual matters, of a radical transformation” (Bergson, 1935: 236). This is the method applied by the great mystics.

Bergson contemplates on how the first method can only be used by society much later, until then it is the second method that can be followed. The great mystics have come to use their superabundant energy on founding these so called religious orders. The impetus of love, which will raise humanity closer to God and make the divine creation absolute, can only reach the goal through the mystics, with the help of God (Bergson, 1935: 236). Therefore, in order to reach the goal, all their effort must be aimed at this very difficult and still incomplete mission.
**Discussion**

**Morality**

Building upon the previous accounts of Kant’s and Bergson’s philosophical views upon morality and religion, we will now proceed to a discussion which will include an analytical examination and comparison of the two philosophers’ works. It is apparent after having gone through both subject matters that they differ in their way of approaching morality and religion. Our analysis will tell that morality and religion are inseparable factors within the works of both philosophers. However, for the sake of simplicity, we shall begin by discussing morality, prior to discussing religion.

The main stepping stone of morality for both Kant and Bergson is the concept of moral obligation. While Kant primarily describes his ideal of what the individual should strive for, Bergson seeks explanation as to how the moral obligation of humans has been till now with his closed morality, and what they ought to strive for with the open morality. The issue with a comparison of the two philosophers arises from the manner in which they base their studies. As mentioned in the chapter concerning Kant’s morality, he seeks to give an account of morality, by maintaining an a priori methodology based upon reason - he does therefore not base his philosophy upon empirical data. Bergson, on the other hand, founds his philosophy in and upon a historical and societal context, which means that he uses empirical data as a part of the foundation, unlike Kant who maintains a strict a priori methodology. Taking both stands into account we will discuss the relation between reason, morality and religion as they seem inseparable for both philosophers.

As a base, Kant has reason constituting the very core of his moral philosophy, and by reason he dissociates the rational human being from animals, since humans have intellect and thereby the ability to reason and self-reflect. Bergson does not disregard reason from his moral philosophy, but it is nevertheless not used as a foundation, as within Kantianism. According to Bergson, the first step towards morality is a conditioned form of instinct, namely habit which comes in forms of pressure from the closed society. The individual is in this case understood as a part of a greater whole, where it necessarily must act morally right in order to maintain social cohesion. This thereby also entails that the individual understands the virtue of fulfilling its moral obligation, and thus recognizes its role in society. However, within Kantian morality, this would not suffice, since he considers the free willing of an action to be crucial in order to act upon reason, and consequently in order to follow the categorical imperative. But according to Bergson, man also has a free will in connection to his intelligence, which he uses to acknowledge his social obligation. In that sense, the categorical imperative and the social obligation are both two kinds of behavioural guidelines for the individual to follow. Whereas Kant starts in reason and ends in reason, Bergson’s social and moral obligation starts with society influencing the individual, and hence reason becomes a product of the pressure from society. In both cases reason cannot be completely excluded. For Kant, the individual would not be able to suffice the categorical imperative without reason, since this would make him unable to realise the consequences of his actions, and thereby his behaviour would, hypothetically, resemble that of an animal. If intelligence, which Bergson calls the source of reason, is withdrawn from the social morality in a closed society, man would in this case only be left with his instinctive habits similar to that of the bees. This would necessarily entail that there would be nothing called moral
obligation, since this is dependent upon intelligence. A moral obligation can only be considered a **moral** obligation if the individual recognises it, otherwise it would be mere instinct.

To sum up, the moral guidelines of both Kant and Bergson are two different ways of looking upon the individual’s influence on morality. Whereas Kant finds the individual to have autonomy along with a reason capable of understanding the categorical imperative, Bergson does also regard the individual as autonomous, who thereby has a free will to break out from the moral obligation. However, the autonomy of the individual is here dominated by its ability to reason. In each case both individuals have autonomy, in the sense that they can always choose not to follow the rules of the categorical imperative or the moral obligation of the closed society. Similarly for them both, the consequences of such an action would be vital. For both Kant and Bergson, a being with reason is well aware of this, as a man with intelligence will use his reason to conclude that staying on the right path will be the best choice for both himself and his fellow beings.

Despite the fact that there is an apparent focus on the autonomy of individuals in Kant’s moral philosophy, humanity still remains a necessity, since the notion of the universal law could not exist without a humanity to apply it to. The individual can therefore not be considered isolated from the rest of humanity. Hence, despite the fact that Kant does not explicitly mention the relationship between the individual and humanity, one could argue that the consequences of individuals breaking the categorical imperative would in the end be catastrophic for humanity.

This bears a resemblance to Bergson’s concept of social obligation; that it is a necessity in order to maintain social cohesion.

**Social obligation** can also be compared to Kant’s explanation of the rational beings instinctive respect of law, namely *duty*. The concept of duty is needed to suffice the categorical imperative; however it does not overrule the individual’s autonomy in matters that clash with personal values and principles. Nonetheless, the closed society is likely to overrule these clashes by appealing to the individual’s reason in order to maintain social cohesion. Despite the arguments for the individual’s maintenance of the categorical imperative, namely *duty* and on Bergson’s side, *social obligation*, one could go further and ask if there was more for the individual to gain. When exploring the moral philosophy of Kant and that of Bergson, one realises that the matter of religion is inevitable in order to answer this question.

**Religion**

Along with Bergson’s *closed society* there is a **static religion** connected. Static religion is a preventive tool against human intelligence used by closed society in its preservation of social cohesion. Bergson argues that this revolution against social obligation derives from two sources, namely selfishness and human despair of death. The idea of an all-powerful God who watches over one’s actions and images of punishments or rewards in the afterlife gives man a personal ideal to strive for, along with a reason as to why he should act morally right. From this one can draw a parallel to Kant’s concept of the *summum bonum*. With this concept he gives an answer to what the individual gains by acting morally right. Quite similar
to Bergson, Kant explains how the individual will have to face the consequences of his actions, however Kant uses the notion of being worthy of happiness in the hereafter.

This is the only place in Kant’s moral philosophy where he is in need of a God. However, Kant does not attempt to prove the existence of God, as he only needs the possibility of God’s existence in order to suffice a reason for acting morally right. Bergson neither tries to prove the existence of God, but that is due to completely different reasons. For him God is a given fact all the way through his philosophy and in the end of vital importance for obtaining absolute morality. The argument for the summum bonum constitutes an ideal for man to strive for: “complete moral virtue together with complete happiness” (SEP). Nevertheless, the static religion of a closed society does not represent an ideal as such, since static religion is a tool used by closed society with the purpose of maintaining social cohesion. Despite the fact that both social cohesion and moral obligation are upheld in the closed society, Bergson argues that absolute morality can only be obtained in an open society.

Summing up, one could say that the higher purpose of Kant’s moral philosophy is to show an ideal of moral action, while Bergson’s closed society accounts for how an individual functions in a society and how morality and religion are incorporated. As previously mentioned, Bergson’s philosophy of both morality and religion are twofold. Respectively, the open society and dynamic religion are of higher order than the closed society and static religion. The open society constitutes an ideal by involving dynamic religion. Bergson does not describe the open society on the same grounds as the closed society, since open society is somehow an ideal society, which man should strive for. For it to succeed there is a need of a mystic to go beyond the pressure of the closed society and to embrace all of humanity. The link to dynamic religion is of great importance as it is through this religion that mystics obtain absolute morality. The shift from closed to open morality is essential to emphasize, since this is where the individual goes beyond intelligence and perceives morality from a completely new perspective. It also entails that the mystic relieves itself from the pressure of society. The radical change of the individual thereby informs us that the dilemma between social obligation and intelligence is no longer of importance to the mystic. To have obtained complete morality through God means that the mystic has been enlightened, and is now able to embrace mankind out of pure love and aspiration. By this, there is no reason as to why the mystics should doubt the open morality, and hereby one can argue that Bergson sees the open morality as an ideal, which is obtainable in the mortal world. This account is an extension of his sociological and historical description of humanity, where the concept of religion is once again taken to be a natural fact.

Though Kant’s moral philosophy resembles Bergson’s closed morality by arguing for the summum bonum, it also suffices to resemble the open morality by being a concept of an ideal. However, Kant’s notion of the ideal is only attainable by the immortality of the soul, consequently only to be achieved in the afterlife. Kant also never mentions a specific religion, but only uses the concept of a deity in a logical and rational manner, whereas Bergson sees Christianity and the Christian mystics as the only ones who have been capable of reaching complete morality. We can thus see that even though Kant and Bergson have a significantly
different approach to the study of morality and religion, they are both in need of reason and God to explain their own version of an ideal morality.

Conclusion

After having studied Immanuel Kant and Henri Bergson, we can verify that they have two very different approaches to the study of morality and religion. While Kant maintains a strict *a priori* methodology, Bergson approaches the topic with a sociological and historical angle. However, as our discussion shows, they bear a closer resemblance than first anticipated. First, the concept of reason has shown itself to be essential for both philosophers, since the individual’s ability to reason is intrinsic to its moral judgment. Whereas Kant sees it as the individual’s ability to act in such a way that it can be applied as a universal law, the categorical imperative, Bergson sees morality as incorporated into society, which is then indirectly imposed upon the individual. Furthermore, despite having different points of departure as well as ends, they both find themselves in need of the concept of religion in order to explain why one should care to act morally right. Even though morality and religion can be studied separately, religion becomes a necessity in order to explain the higher purpose of morality – in Kantian terms the *summum bonum* and within Bergsonism *absolute morality*.

From the connection we have found between morality and religion within Kant and Bergson’s philosophy, one could take it to another level and question whether or not this applies to the real world in practice. Are religion and morality also inseparable in modern societies today? James Rachels, a University Professor of Philosophy at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, argues how in “Popular thinking, morality and religion are inseparable: People commonly believe that morality can be understood only in the context of religion” (Rachels, 1999: 54). It is important to note that, although other religions have had a large influence,
Christianity is what people generally have in mind when discussing religion in relation to morality. One can find several situations where morality and religion are interconnected. For example, in the United States where 90 percent of the population believe in God (Rachels, 1999: 53), the health sector often uses priests as authorities within moral issues, such as abortion and organ donation. Not only do the priests function as spiritual guides, but they also use their insight to assist in more practical matters. This is similar to what Kant and Bergson conclude, that religion can often be an answer to moral issues, by giving a higher purpose for the individual to strive for, in matters that might seem incomprehensible for the mind to handle. Summing up, it is interesting to see to which extent aging philosophical theories remain valid in modern societies. Even though the degree of religion’s influence varies from each society, country or continent, morality is still today an important branch of philosophy, as well as an important field within the modern world.

Formalia

Group Dynamics

This is our second semester at HIB. When we first started the group formation process back in January, we all came with our different share of experience from the first semester, which had been a very busy, but nonetheless motivating semester. The group that was to be formed was not filled with strangers, but with three out of four group members, that had worked together before. The four of us first chose to work with the student proposal called “Philosophy of Time Travel”. We did not know exactly what our specific focus would be, but we were all somehow interested in the concept of time, so the following weeks we discussed back and fourth what could be interesting to work with. At the same time a new member entered the group, who had not been there doing the week of project formation. Unfortunately she had some personal issues she was dealing with, and did not show up very often to our meetings, so we talked to her about it and in the end she decided herself to leave the group. When we got to the problem formulation seminar in mid February, we were still dealing with the concept of time, but not time travel. We were instead all interested in how time is perceived within different cultures and religions in the world, for example by comparing an Eastern philosopher with a Western. However, when trying to go more in to the subject matter and find interesting material about it, we somehow it to be too intangible and not very precise. However while we were still on the subject of time, we stumbled across Henri Bergson, which we found to have some interesting ideas about morality and religion. Moreover we still intended to have two views upon the same subject matter, so we agreed to include an already introduced philosopher, namely Immanuel Kant. As a result, we changed direction from working with the concept of
time to “Two Philosophical views upon Morality and Religion”. After having found literature, we started reading, contemplating and discussing what their philosophies really concerned and how they could be set up against each other. Later in the process, after the midterm seminar, the concept of reason came into the picture, to give more crisp to our project, as it showed to be of great importance for both philosophers. Finally after giving a glance back on this last months, we can say to have worked very hard on a difficult topic, which definitely has been a good and interesting exercise. We have worked very well together, although having many philosophical and heated discussions, with the boys in one corner being pro-Kant and the girls being pro-Bergson in the other.

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Summary in German

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