

Dr Joanna Miksa
University of Lodz
Ethics Department

Thomas Reid and Immanuel Kant on Virtues

Kantian theory of virtues is certainly not the part of his moral theory which made his reputation but nevertheless it is an important element of it. In my statement I shall compare the notion of virtue coined by Immanuel Kant and that advocated by Thomas Reid. Putting those two notions together will have as its objective to reach a clarification of the moral principles in which those two concepts of virtue are rooted. First of all there is the notion of empirically given nature that Thomas Reid accepts as a justification for his notion of morality and the notion of the intelligible nature that Kant puts forward. The latter one in the same time denies that the physical nature we belong to may be of any relevance as far as the justification of moral law is concerned. Secondly, I will analyse the place of happiness in moral anthropology of the two philosophical opponents, a thing that is crucial and trustworthy without reservation for Thomas Reid and ambivalent for Immanuel Kant. Thirdly, I will draw attention to the fact that the notion of virtue that Kant proposes is not to be regarded only as a plan of an individual development, but presupposes creating relations that should unite people living in a community, like the duty to help the others in achieving happiness. At the same time virtues according to Kant should not be interfered with by the state although it is beneficial for the state if the people are virtuous. In his turn Reid concentrates only on virtue as necessary precondition for people to live well together and does not define a frontier between the state as a lawgiver and the human freedom to be virtuous in the way Kant does. In the last place I shall try to understand what consequences the concepts of virtue, advocated respectively by Reid and Kant might have for the vision of the political community.