

Summary

In the article *Saints and Heroes* J.O. Urmson presented the concept of supererogative actions, i.e. actions that are commonly associated with behaviors that go beyond duty. Urmson's article initiated a substantively rich discussion, but also contributed to numerous polemics. Due to the moral value of actions, it is customary to distinguish three distinct classes. The first class: mandatory actions, that is, actions that are our duties or that we should perform; the second is the class of morally permissible acts, that is, those not morally required of us; the third class is bad deeds that we should not perform. Against such a division - and thus also a specific vision of morality - the aforementioned James Urmson arose, thanks to the already classic article the dispute over the moral duties and obligations of man flared up again.

Urmson's postulates for the distinction between duties and supererogation draw attention to the special nature of the latter. Nevertheless, they do not answer the question of where the obligation ends and where the extra-obligatory action begins. It is easy to give examples of activities that we clearly qualify as obligations, it is also easy to give examples of acts of moral heroism that will not raise doubts as to their character. However, the richness of moral action is much broader for there is a whole range of activities that it will be difficult to unquestionably classify into one or the other group – then Urmson's arguments will be of little use. We can imagine life situations that may be heroic in nature, in which a person is deprived of the possibility of choice, which is so strongly emphasized in the case of taking acts of supererogation.

Urmson notes that there is a huge gap between human nature and moral ideals, hence the enrichment of the tripartite with ideal actions still allows the defense of duty as a basic ethical category, and at the same time does not eliminate moral heroism, but clearly differentiating it from duty. A certain dissonance arises with the distinction between the class of glorious activities: if we approve of deeds that are of high value, why should we not want them to be recommended, and why not strive to do them. It is very difficult to defend an attitude in which we value something, but at the same time we do not believe that we should strive for this precious good.

The problem with supererogative acts is that if we decide to add them to our list of duties, we may end up with a very unrealistic effect, namely requiring that we all be heroes. As it may seem, many people will not be able to meet such imperative, and a person may

begin to doubt that he is fully capable of being a moral subject realizing valuable moral values. The second option is to consider only some of the deeds as our obligations, while the other part depends only on our will or a momentary whim - these are actions of the type "I can, I don't have to". If we accept their extra-compulsory nature, then we must also admit that they are admirable but not mandated. The point is that the line between the two is not at all certain.

The Christian tradition recommends supererogative acts because they expand the limits of man's moral possibilities. We want to pursue as many goods and noble goals as possible. The set of goods that we strive for when we act morally is not closed, but open. No set of moral rules and norms can capture all the wealth of values and actions.

Utilitarianism is equally ambitious and contests that moral life is too complex to be included in a transparent theoretical system. Tries to prove and justify the complexity of moral judgments in the "idea of producing the best results". Utilitarianism wants the happiness, interests and desires of all people to always be of equal value and to maximize the utility of as many people as possible. Therefore, it seems, utilitarianism is especially predisposed to find a place within it for supererogative activities.

Subsequent post-Urmson attempts to transform utilitarianism have shown, however, that this is not an easy task. Each idea also raised objections, from which the conclusion emerged that in order to find a place for supererogation in the theoretical framework of utilitarianism, not only the utilitarianism itself should be modified, but also the understanding of the concept of morality should be changed.

It seems that the best alternative, in the face of the failures of designing new versions of utilitarianism, is to stop building subsequent versions of it and focus on looking for a demarcation line between what is perfect and what is more perfect, thus agreeing to include supererogation in utilitarianism.