

Many people argue that helping others is a must, a compulsory movement a human being must perform. This argument in itself has stemmed from an honest mind, wishing for a more caring world. Nonetheless, however beneficial the cause may be, I believe that this will not work in the way it intended to, as it may cause a possible infringement on the freedom of individuals under the title of ‘good deed’. Not only it violates the constitution, but it also infringes a man’s basic rights. Also, compelling good deeds under the current system seems to be causing its own problems itself, and ultimately, the ambiguity of ‘just’ actions seems to fail in bringing compulsion.

First, we have to consider the fact that the act of helping others is a judgment by one’s own conscience, and conscience is something that cannot be forced because it is one of basic human right, so it is protected by law. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is as follows; Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance. And article 19 of the Constitution of the Republic of Korea states, guaranteeing the article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that “all citizens have freedom of conscience.” And conscience is defined as which “includes not only the world view, life view, attention, and creed, but also the value and ethical judgements about inwardness related to the formation of personality more widely”, so freedom of conscience encompasses the freedom not to be forced to express such ethical judgment outside by the state power, mentioned by the Constitutional court of the Republic of Korea. Although I acknowledge that it is a suggestion from good faith that everyone should accept helping someone in need is compulsory, but I would like to point out that the suggestion implies the possibility of infringement of the freedom of conscience by others, thus infringing on individual human rights.

Secondly, imposing people to help others causes realistic problems, as not everyone pays goodwill in response to honest intentions. There are many practical cases such as claiming for the compensation for the broken ribs during CPR or suing for sexual harassment because of the removal of clothes during first aid treatment. The current law system of Korea provides only so much legal protection for the ‘good Samaritans’ from the hazard of getting sued or receiving any other penalties. Of course, in most cases, the court will relieve the righteous by applying the provisions of the law such as “Indemnity for Emergency Care” when charged. But that does not compensate all the time and money spent until the judgment is decided. Furthermore, there is almost no legal protection when it comes to self – defenses to defend the infringement of the legal interest of others, especially when the person who has helped runs away or declines to make the statement proving that you helped the victim in good faith. These situations are even worse in that you can even be blamed for the offense of the perpetrator, or in luck, be punished with excessive repression. Given these circumstances, it is irresponsible to tell people that you need to give goodwill to someone who needs help.

Lastly, it is not clear to what extent the obligation to ‘help someone who is in need’ should be set, and by that ambiguity, the meaning of coercion fades. For example, there is a limit to understanding from the perspective of a passerby whether a person who is lying on a roadside in the middle of the night is a patient who needs urgent help, a person who is just drunk university student, or a burglar who is disguised as a fallen person. We cannot set the criteria for when to help this man and when to not. This ambiguity, by itself, becomes a void of “duty”. Is there any meaning of imposing ‘obligation’ when there is aperture to avoid it?

A world where people care for each other may resemble a paradise, but just because it appears to be close to perfection doesn’t mean it is right to enforce people to act in a standardized way; it may be a serious breach of constitutional law and violation of basic human rights, and enforcement itself causes problems. Also, the standard of standardization may vary from a person to person, hence causing what feels to be ideal to one seem less ideal

to others. These dilemmas prove that invoking people to follow a given guideline on specific occasions is far from a utopia but mere oppression and another form of tyranny, a possible form of dystopia. Human beings, as a social animal, knows instinctively when another person needs help. It would be better for all if we let our instincts decide when aid is necessary.

I love watching Marble movies. Most of all, two of my favorite characters are Iron Man and Captain America. Their characteristics are very different, but they both risk their lives to fight bad guys and save people. Sadly, sometimes they lose their beloved ones in the middle of helping others. At this point, I find something a little weird. Most of the people they help are complete strangers. Then, why do they bother to save strangers, instead of caring their own business? What are heroes' motivations of helping others? Certainly they must have some kind of obligation in their minds that they should give a hand to someone in need. Of course that obligation does not mean they have to follow it or they are punished. But maybe it's social perception that heroes should help others for the society and the world. This obligation says that one should help another, even though he or she is having hard time. And I believe this is one of the essential values of the society. In this essay, first I'll introduce several motivations of the helping behavior. Second, I'll focus on the importance of the obligation as social responsibility.

Although the classification is a little different from scholar to scholar, behavioral psychologists agree that there are three explanations for helping others: natural explanation, individual explanation, and social explanation.¹ Natural explanation describes that people are naturally inclined to help others. Evolutionary pressures qualify that people are most likely to help those who will help them pass on their own genes or similar genes. So, people are more likely to help relatives than nonrelatives, by which they can survive subsequent generations. Secondly, Individual explanation says we help others because of individual reason. One of the reasons is the feelings of empathy that produces a merging with the other and makes us experience other person's pain. So people help someone in need to relieve their own emotional pain. The other reason of individual explanation is the expectation of reward. When people do something for another's sake, they expect something in return. The reward can be emotional, monetary, service or social reputation. Lastly, social explanation describes that social norms let people help each other. This theory suggests that society's culture and learning processes, called socialization, is the source of helping behaviors. Social norms are divided into two parts. One is the norm of reciprocity, which means that if someone does something for you, then you are obligated to do something in return. Second is the norm of responsibility. It says that people generally believe they're responsible for helping others in the society, and that they should help others in need, especially children, the elderly, or someone with disability. People with social responsibility believe that helping others leads to decrease in social inequality.

For the sake of distinction, it is necessary to define the meaning of 'choice' and 'obligation.' First, let's connect the characteristics of choice with individual explanation. The choice is the matter of personal belief, principle, or goal. It excludes thoughts about socialization or social responsibility. As mentioned in individual explanation, one may choose to help others because she wants something back, or she empathizes with the pain of others. For example, you may help your boss considering your next promotion. Or you may help a man who sprained his ankle because it reminds you of personal painful experience. On the other hand, obligation means social norms or responsibility operates when we see someone in need. This obligation is a cultural or learning-based belief that we are to follow in the society. For example, we often give our seat to children or the old on bus even though we're tired, since we think that's our responsibility.

Keeping this responsibility in mind is very important. Most of all, social obligation makes people introspect themselves and contribute to overall helping behaviors. Many studies show that people tend to do more helping behaviors if they're exposed to the prosocial environment. For example, in one interesting experiment, participants were asked to listen to songs with prosocial lyrics or songs with neutral lyrics.² And the researcher found that the percentage making a donation to a charity was bigger for people who listened to songs with prosocial lyrics than for people who listened to neutral lyrics. This experiment shows how prosocial culture and environment plays an important role for building prosocial consciousness in minds. Having the consciousness of responsibility, we could think once more whether to help someone in need even though we're busy, exhausted or sometimes a little selfish.

What could happen if the society lacks the obligation? There are many examples. One of the representative cases is that of Kitty Genovese in 1964, who was murdered outside her house in New York³, while 38 witnesses did nothing to help her. Famous for bystander effect, this case shows how irresponsible people can be in the absence of obligation in minds. They might have thought somebody must have called police. But if they had had inner obligation that they should do something themselves, then the result could have been much different. Sad events are occurring these days as well, where victims are neglected and not helped. One shocking news shows an unconscious and bleeding woman beside a road being left for a long time, until a bus driver finally came to help her.⁴ As in these cases, some people ignore other's hardship because they might think it's none of their business. But that's not true. Victims can be our beloved ones or us anytime. As we live in the society, we are not a complete stranger to each other. The social obligation can connect us so that an individual doesn't fall or die out alone.

Social obligation acts as a contributor to overall helping behaviors in the society, and it can be a cushion that prevents isolation between people. People intrinsically act for themselves. Especially in the modern society, such tendencies are prominent because freedom and individual values are

considered very important. But social obligation makes us concern others and realize that we are always in the society. In the real world, we don't have Marble heroes. But we do have their obligation and responsibility. I want to believe any tiny act of helping others is actually for a larger cause, a brighter world. That is the obligation we should keep in mind.

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Is it a choice or an obligation to help someone in need?

3 위 수상작

I believe it is a choice to help someone in need rather than an obligation. In Russia, there is a saying 'The tears of strangers are only water'. It means other people's pain is only theirs to take and not for me. This sentence has always been deep down in my heart and a lot of the things I did were based on that philosophy. Some might think I am a horrible human being who would not help anybody and only act for my own benefit. Some might say I'm a selfish man. I am not denying that people need to help each other. We built this civilization by helping each other and being a social being. However, I do not believe that it is an obligation to help someone in need although I do believe it is a good thing to help the others. That is, giving someone a hand should be done totally voluntarily, not by external force.

First, I believe that it is wrong to insist that people should be forced to help the others since it is morally right. People have been taught throughout the history of mankind by religious leaders that it is a right thing to always help everyone. We have been told that it is a right thing to aid someone who needs my help. But is it truly a right thing? Would I be doing wrong if I decide not to care for the others in order to take better care of myself? In the Oxford English dictionary, it says the definition of 'righteousness' is 'the quality of being morally right or justifiable'. Again, I quote from Oxford English dictionary, 'to justify' means to 'show or prove to be right or reasonable'. According to Wikipedia, 'Morality' is the differentiation of intentions, decisions and actions between those that are distinguished as proper and those that are improper. Morality can be a body of standards or principles derived from a code of conduct from a particular philosophy, religion or culture, or it can derive from a standard that a person believes should be universal. Morality may also be specifically synonymous with "goodness" or "rightness". In other words, there is no clear agreement to who decides what is morally right or wrong. It is more like a promise that people make with people who share same religion or culture. Depending on someone's cultural or religious backgrounds, someone's standard against morality can vary. About a hundred years ago, girls in China had to wrap their feet with thick clothes in order to prevent them from growing bigger. Small feet were considered beautiful those days and parents would wrap their daughters' feet for years until they grew up to be an adult. They're feet would be too small that they wouldn't be able to walk properly and they had to spend years in pain as their feet bones grew abnormally. Now, can we as good righteous citizens of twenty first century, say that those Chinese were evil? In the same sense, can we point our fingers to all the Muslims and blame them for making their women wear a hijab every single day? It would be a terrible mistake to judge people with moral standards which is not absolute. Therefore, if a man decides to not help someone, it would be an honorable thing. However, to say that the man is evil for not giving the other guy a hand would be absurd. Therefore, it is wrong to force people to help the others because it would be a moral thing to do.

Second, I believe that pursuing one's well-being should come first rather than one's attention towards the good of the society and it is not something to be blamed. I think there is no obligation for anyone to sacrifice oneself in order to aid the others. Every time someone helps out the others, they are making a sacrifice. Some might argue that what if a kid has a ball stuck in the trees? He simply wants his ball back and I will not have to spend any money and it will not cost me anything. In fact, if I decide to help the poor boy and

spend time trying to get the ball for him, I am spending my valuable time for the boy. No one lives forever and time is a finite resource. I could have rather chose to go to work and spent more time to get more paychecks. I could have just gone to see my friends and relieve my stress from work. I would have to give up my chances of doing something that would benefit myself and devote my time in helping him. Still some might argue, if by making an individual sacrifice if the society could be a better place, would it not be worth it? I believe this is a dangerous statement. This kind of ideology can be linked with Nazi Germany. Quoting from the paper 'History and sacrificial death' written by Richard A. Koenigsberg, 'Hitler's thinking about war revolved around the idea that individuals are obliged to sacrifice their lives for their nation' While my comparison could look a bit dramatic to bring up Hitler's idea of patriotism from pulling a ball off a branch for a little kid, I am firm that this is not an exaggerated extension. The basic concept that lies beneath this example and Hitler are the same. To demand sacrifice mandatorily for the greater good of the society. Mankind has witnessed massive destruction and warfare due to this very ideology. In fact, this is the very principle that the free countries of West have been fighting against. All those bloods have been shed for the freedom of individuals. To let our sons and daughters be free of any oppression. To not be forced to make a sacrifice. We must never hinder one's freedom for the sakes of the well-being of the society.

In conclusion, giving someone a hand in hard times is a very noble gesture. There is no doubt in that when it is done voluntarily. However, to force and oblige someone to act for the others against their own interest just because it seems like a right thing to do is not right since there is no clear evidence that it is actually morally right. Also, to make people give up what is best for their interest in order to benefit other members of the society is a mistake that a lot of people have made in history and we came a long way to fight against that. Therefore I believe it is a choice to help someone.

Helping those in need; a choice to be chosen

Honorable Mention 수상작

We live in a society where our actions are subconsciously judged by others. In this regard, people feel the pressure to behave properly in a kind manner and to ultimately plant a good impression of themselves to others. The 'Good Samaritan Law,' a law in which people were fined or sentenced to imprisonment for not helping those in need regardless of whether it directly affects them or not, is a potential root of our subconscious thoughts. This law originates from the Bible, where a kind Samaritan helps a man that had been robbed. Although it may seem like this law has a good intention of trying to encourage people in helping others and by extension, creating a warm society, it can also be seen in a critical view where people feel forced to help others regardless of their sincerity. The Good Samaritan Law that is enforced in many countries, such as Australia, Germany, and the United States is controversial: helping someone should not be an obligation. On this wise, I claim that it is a choice to give a helping hand to those in need because fundamentally, the 'Good Samaritan Law' invades an individual's right of freedom. Also, at a practical level, we are not able to make a value judgment of which people we should help, because there is no absolute criterion to determine someone 'in need,' and lastly, the key in transforming the society is changing people's notions of helping others.

With respect to the aforementioned 'Good Samaritan Law' as precedent, making helping people obligatory violates the moral domain of people. That is to say, violating the moral domain of people is equivalent to restricting the rights of freedom. In the 19th century, the German jurist Georg Jellinek contended that by all means, "law should be the minimum of morality." Although it is right to say that an individual should be punished in point of law if it is obvious that their unethical behavior inflicts an obvious loss or infringes the right of others, we should follow the principle that 'law is the minimal of morality.' If laws interfere and punish all acts of unethical behavior, it will give rise to a society under control by the nation. Herein, the government will gain immoderate power as the people will lose their liberty, which may potentially lead to dictatorship. In addition, the standard between law and responsibility is quite ambiguous. According to 'Article 19' of the Constitution, every nation has its freedom of conscience and every law of the nation has to be made based on the constitution. However, restricting the human nature of conscience imposed by law infringes the rights of freedom as well as the constitution itself.

Not only is the standard between law and responsibility ambiguous, but there are also no absolute criteria of people that are 'in need.' Like this, it is difficult to make a value judgment of who needs help and resultingly, who will be punished for not helping. The moral values of each

individual subjectivize the judgment of who is 'in need,' and thus creates a wide range of human behavior. The different context of the situation can give room for diverse interpretations, for example, the 'Wildcat engine,' in which one has to make the decision to kill 10 men in a disconnected railroad or change the direction and kill 1 man on the other railroad. In this context, it is complex to compare who is more 'in need': who should be prioritized in being saved from the train accident. For this reason, it intently relies on the standard of each individual of whom they think they should help and whom they want to help.

Lastly, in a futuristic manner, there is no guarantee that society will improve notwithstanding the fact that helping people in need becomes an obligation. There are many examples in our everyday lives where we conduct ourselves in doing certain things without knowing why we are doing them. For example, in Korean culture, we learn to use an honorific form of language to people older than us; yet, we seldom question why. We learn from teaching by rote that it is a way of showing respect, but it is only when we travel to other countries that we realize that it is possible to respect others without using honorific forms. Also, Korea using this type of linguistics does not necessarily mean that Korea has a greater number of people respecting each other than other countries. It is the thoughts and values of an individual that has to change in order to transform our world. The act of helping has its most powerful when it is done out of true kindness and a sincere heart, not when it is done out of the sense of obligation.

In this sense, helping people in need is a choice and not an obligation. The law of pressuring people to help others not only invades their moral realm but also violates their rights. Also, there is no absolute criterion of 'in need;' therefore, it solely depends on each individual's perspective of whom they are willing to help, and lastly, a betterment of a society can be fulfilled only when more and more people improve their thoughts in wanting to help others. In spite that there is a possibility to build solidarity and community spirits within our society by helping out of social and moral responsibility, it is an inevitable fact that there is a limit to an active involvement in the sense of obligation. Helping others is a choice of an individual, a choice that can serve as a starting point in transforming our society into a more loving one.

The right to refuse

Honorable Mention 수상작

Mr. Brown has decided not to help a woman. He had an important meeting appointment, and if he helps a woman who drops things on the floor, it seems clear that he will be late for that appointment. This is just one common example. In life, we can hear or see manifold stories of people in need. We can often see a child in the rain without an umbrella or UNICEF ads on the screens that there are people in need of our help all over the world. Street tramps, students who have concerns with their grades, or a drowning child who cannot swim, there are countless people in the world who need help. Therefore, it is inevitable that the debate on whether it is a choice or an obligation to help people in need.

In order to deal with this topic, it is necessary to make a clear definition of what the obligation is. What is an obligation? According to Google, an obligation is "an act or course of action to which a person is morally or legally bound; a duty or commitment (Google 2019)". Although there are some differences depending on the dictionaries or sites, an obligation generally has the meaning of force. Hence, if someone does not do one's obligation, the person is legally or morally punished. The reason or background of the person may be taken into account, but the judgment of the punishment is done by consistent and equal rules or laws to everyone. Unlike the obligation, there is no such clear criterion in choice. All judgments are made in each mind, and people accept the

results of those judgments. In the process, people pay the price of judgments by feel guilty or self-defeating. Here are two reasons why helping people in need is not an obligation. It is unfair to infringe on someone's freedom and the right for the benefit of others, and no one can make objective and consistent standards to judge whether someone is capable of helping a person who needs help. As a result, helping someone in need must be a choice. From this perspective, we can understand the nature of help.

People often misunderstand about help. People often say that helping people is always a positive act. However, it is not unconditional. Let's assume there's a beggar who does not have the money and is starving to death here. Will you help the beggar? If you think you're going to help the beggar, then let's assume that you have not much money this time. If you donate money to him, your family won't be able to have a good meal. Will you help the beggar? What if the beggar refuses to get help? A person can suffer some loss or risk in helping others. And at the risk or loss, it cannot be anyone else except himself who decides to help others. Everyone has the freedom and the right to avoid danger. If it is an obligation to help someone, it means to take away personal freedom and the right. Now we can talk about what is good help. Good help occur when the other person wants help, and the helper decided to help him although he takes a risk. For the benefit of someone else, it makes no sense to deprive one of his freedom and rights. That is why no one can judge or punish someone for not helping or helping someone. It is a choice rather than an obligation to judge a decision by oneself, accept the outcome of the decision. For this reason, helping someone is not an obligation but a choice.

Nevertheless, it is clear that some people still say it is an obligation to help someone. Then suppose that helping someone is an obligation, not a choice. In other words, if you don't help someone, you will be punished. Let's go back to the beggar's story above. Suppose someone has a million dollars and has not donated money to beggars. Can we punish him? If you think so, then how about a thousand dollars? A thousand dollars, a hundred dollars, or one dollar... from what point can we not punish him? Maybe people will say different answers to each other to this question. And the criteria are also unclear or inconsistent. Even the criteria can be changed according to the judges' mood, place or weather of the day. According to the definition of obligation and choice that I mentioned above, if someone fails to perform his obligation, then the person will be judged in the presence of equal law or rules, although his cause or background may be considered. However, the above example shows that helping people is not an obligation. No one else can clearly decide whether or not to help someone. In that situation, the person who only decides about that is a helper. Do not misunderstand. This doesn't mean that helper doesn't pay a price. They will be regretful, satisfied, proud, or guilty about the outcome of their decisions. It seems clear that it is the choice to help someone.

To summarize, in order to protect individual rights and freedoms, and a probability for subjective and emotional judgment without clear criteria, helping someone must be a choice, not an obligation. Of course, there are many people will still object to this. They will take examples of a child who is drowning and there's no one around who can help but me. They may ask me "In this case, helping people who are in need is still a choice?" However that does not change my opinion.

First, sacrificing one person for someone else cannot be a good solution. Next, it is not good to take the marginal case and then use that to argue. In our lives, we meet many people who need help, and most of them are not in such a marginal situation. For such exceptional circumstances, there is room for judgment as an obligation to help people. However, people who need the help we encounter in our daily lives are in common situation. In other common cases, helping someone must be a choice. Therefore, my opinion does not change that helping someone cannot be an obligation.

"I swear by my life and my love of it that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine (RandAyn, October 10, 1957)." This quotation is extreme, but it expresses to some extent what I want to say. "It is a choice that helps people in need" do not mean that we should not help anyone else. It means that for someone else's sake, it is unfair to force a person to sacrifice. Good help starts with someone asking for help, and someone else accepting the request. No one else can force it in the process. There is no meaning to the obligatory help. I think this idea is essential for the freedom and rights of everyone in the world.

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