

MORAL PERMISSION - WHAT IT SAYS, DOES AND MEANS AND WHY WE WANT IT

We never act without thinking - perhaps in the back of our hearts and minds - that we want permission and need it.

If there is nobody around to permit we even have to imagine or "perceive" that there is a God to permit us! Atheists might wish there was a God to permit them. They still get a feeling that they should be permitted - that if there were a God he should permit. Thus the doctrine is connected to how even an atheist feels that he or she can do a bad thing.

We don't like the feeling of having too much responsibility so if we feel permitted by others to do something dangerous or evil we enjoy the sense that we alone were not to blame. We get reassurance from permission before and after we act.

Permission is not approval but it is saying, "Go for it!"

We want the permission of others (including God, especially God) for these reasons:

We feel they are more in a position to agree with us proceeding for they may know better.

Even if I know as much as them I don't feel alone in how I am going to act. They permit me. I feel united with those who permit me. They are part of the course I am going to take.

The more evil the act I plan the easier it will be for me to do it if I feel they choose to let me.

Tacit permission rather than them telling me straight out to do it can speak as loud if not louder. If people stand by and say nothing as I plan to murder I will feel very supported for they dare say nothing to support me doing something so terrible they just stand by as if saying, "Its so evil but we will let you do it and our silence is admitting it is evil and also that we don't want you stopped." That in a way is the loudest way to endorse the crime.

When it comes to doing what you want or need to do, fear can put you off. You don't want to be wrong or look like a fool or find out you wasted your time. Those reflect not just fear but fear of the opinion of others which will judge you.

Implicitly you think their need their unspoken and perhaps spoken permission. You feel and act as if you don't own your own authority. As if you don't own your own agency. So you want some kind of permission from them.

If God is with you even as you do evil - even that is not a waste of time for he makes the evil backfire or turn out better than you'd expect! You need to be atheist to feel that you really can waste time and energy doing bad!

You want to own your choice but you don't want to be the sole owner. You want your choice to say something about what kind of things others permit. Even if you say you have gone your own way how true is that? You have not made it about your judgement only but also and perhaps only theirs.

The quest for permission of some kind is really about you trying to spread out responsibility for what you do. If others permit you to do something then in some way they are responsible for your life. It can be about you thinking they know something you don't or about you fearing them if you rebel against them and do your own thing. You give your power to others.

Permission is seen as a gift from others (including God and especially God) to us. It becomes like a sort of reward for being good or even bad in the eyes of others. It is definitely a pre-reward, when the good result happens before the action! They trust us and permit us to do stuff if they have rated us as trustworthy enough. And you can be trusted to do a bad thing.

You must recognise the value of personal accountability. You own your action. You own the reasons why you act. This is not about implying that you have done something bad - accountable means good deservings and not just bad ones. Own your acts and you will feel more free instead of being attached to what others think just because they think it. You cannot grow and be creative in such a scheme. You will only need their permission more and more. And your reward will be resentment and disappointment.

Belief in a creator God who permits you to act but not to sin does not make any sense. Of course he is standing by letting you sin so that is permission. And what about how you will feel it is permission even if it is not? He created that feeling in you!

Worrying that you give yourself value scares people and so they try to say God gives you value. But whether there is a God or not that does not solve the problem. If you get the authority from God to put your own value on yourself that is still you

owning your own authority you own the power to self-value whether atheism or theism is true.

Belief in a creator God leads to the thought, "He permits me", and the feeling, "He permits me". It leads to the thought and feeling, "He has permitted those people to permit me". The feeling that responsibility for doing harm is spread out and so you are not so bad is probably what faith in God is for. You spread it out most of all over God! God's tacit permission can be extremely dangerous - maybe it is the tacit permission behind how we do harm if others are silent? He made them after all. What if they are his instruments?