

Having a heart sensitive to the sufferings of the others is certainly a virtue, but also a challenge. A compassionate leader or a group of leaders seem like a compelling idea, but we should examine the possibility of such systems to preserve in reality, over the course of time. It may seem to be an ideal governance, but, as every ideal, it would have to deal with many hardships. Before giving a conclusion, I will analyse different parts of this quote. I will examine these questions derived from this quote: Is it true that we all have a heart sensitive to the sufferings of the others? Is it easy to rule with a compassionate government? Should governance be easy?

Socrates thought that the evil comes from human ignorance. If we all knew what the evil was, we would never choose to follow it. Knowledge and reason direct us towards the good, as a main guide that should lead our lives. Therefore, if we have no obstacles to use our reason, and we choose it to guide our decisions, we would leave a virtuous life. Our heart would not be devoid of compassion, since caring about others and being sensitive about their sufferings is one of the crucial aspects of leading a virtuous life.

Kant, in his Categorical imperative, asserted that we should always act as though the maxim of our act were to become a universal law. In addition, we should always treat other humans as an end, never only as a means. But even if we do so, does it necessarily mean that we have compassion? For instance, if I helped a person who was struggling to carry their bags by themselves, only because my parents saw that person and ordered me to do that, and, if there was no similar order, I would not be worried for that person and I would not have helped them, does it mean that I had compassion? No, I did not, I only followed my parents' order. On the other hand, if I genuinely understood that person's suffering and wanted to help them, but fell before I managed to do it, or even hurt that person by accident, is it justifiable to say that I did not have compassion? The answer is negative again, since my intentions were motivated by compassion, even though I failed to help that person like I wanted to. Kant thought that the scope of morality was the scope of reason, which means that my moral actions do not have to be motivated by feelings, in fact, although my attentions were undoubtedly better in the second example, my action was morally better in the first one.

Many philosophers argued about the importance of compassion, for example Levinas, who emphasized the importance of care for the Other, and claimed the ethics should be in the centre of philosophy. But that still does not answer the question of universal possession of compassion regarding humans. Those who deliberately hurt others and do not regret about their actions, clearly do not have compassion. Regardless the reasons for that, it is rather arguable to assert that all people have it, even though we can claim that all people should have it.

A monarch whose primary concern are his own interests, a dictator who possess all the power in his own hands, or a government consisted of people who care the most about their own status, wealth and similar, are not examples of a compassionate government. Through the course of history, rarely the one who rules would be known for his compassion. Values appreciated in such a person, or a selected number of persons, are changing: it could be wisdom, courage, justice, faith, and more. Plato claimed that political leaders should be philosophers, since they possess the highest virtues. On the other hand, Machiavelli asserted it was better that the others fear the leader, than that they love them. We could argue that it is easier to provoke fear than love among the followers, and it could be easier to maintain the governance of fear, since it guarantees obedience of the followers. But, over centuries, people fought for their liberties and managed to reach different scales of emancipation, significantly influencing political regimes. Libertarian philosophers, such as Mill, stated that the best form of governance is the one in which the general disposition of the people was caring about others', not only one's own interests. We could agree with this position if we agree that establishing and maintaining the general welfare should be the primary goal of any governance. It seems less arguable that this is the morally better form of governance, unlike the governance based on fear of the governed.

Care about the general welfare includes acting in accordance with compassion. It may be morally right, but it is arguable whether it is easy or not to establish obedience in a society with compassionate government. In his 'Leviathan', Hobbes presented strong, strict and powerful governance that was supposed to make citizens obedient, and maintain order in that society, since he did not think that compassion was a part of human nature. Before the establishment of the social contract, people lived in state without moral values and order. This means that the leaders should not rely on the supposedly universal virtues of the human nature, but rather presume that people need a strong authority to guide them.

In an ideal society, political regime consisting of virtuous people, who deserve their positions, would easily govern the governed, who would be virtuous people as well. But utopian ideas did not survive the test of time, they did not last or were never established. The success of a specific government depends on the government itself, but on the governed people as well. The lower intellectual and moral standard of the people is, the harder it is for compassionate government to sustain. Theoretically the best regime is not always the best in reality. Democracy could be considered as the best political regime today, but it still has its fallacies. For instance, Plato claimed that if three shepherds could outvote Socrates and him, then he would not want to live in such a society. Democracy does not take individual characteristics of the people into consideration, it is based on the equal rights of every citizen, who possess a citizenship and is not under-aged. Today, the majority of people strive for political, social, economic emancipation. Rights are often demanded before the virtuousness. But finding a better alternative is not an easy task in practice. It could be better to evaluate voting of the different people differently, or to demand strict specifications for those who govern, regardless the outcome of voting. But it would certainly not be easy to create a productive system of evaluation and make a consensus about the best criterions.

Question of the obligations of government is also arguable. For example, Rawls thought that the best society is the one where lives of those in the worst positions are better than in the other societies. Governance should be constructed in such a way that it helps those who need it the most, which could

be called a compassionate government, although it emphasizes the importance of compassion towards the ones in the worst positions, more than towards the others. This system can be challenged by those who do not think that the wealthy ones should limit their wealth in order to follow altruism and help others. Nozick, for example, disagreed with the claims of Rawls and thought society should allow each individual to gain as much wealth as they are able to, without breaking the law. For instance, if a sportsman earns millions, he does not break any law and many people willingly pay to watch his matches, it is not unfair that he earns millions, even if some people are poor and struggle to survive. Society is not obligated to create economic balance between people. Still, altruism is a possible choice of every individual, and would be considered morally right, but it is not obligatory, and is not an obligation of a government.

In societies where mass media enabled many people to enjoy the contexts they could not reach before, where finding a simpler version of the original work of art is more common than striving to be informed enough to understand the original, where the way that people live is increasingly changing, and many primary demand their rights, while secondary take their obligations and what they deserved into account, a sensitive heart behind compassionate government is hardly going to make governance easy. But because it is not easy, it does not mean that it is wrong. Regardless the outcome it has in reality, being governed by those with compassion seems more satisfying than living in fear of those who govern. But compassion should not be the only characteristic of government. Sometimes it is not possible to be compassionate towards every agent involved in a situation, it is not possible to help everyone, not everyone can always benefit. Decreasing poverty, as a task of compassionate government would be financially, but also politically hard in libertarian societies that strive to limit the power of government. In many war situations, leaders are faced with ethical dilemmas and have to decide between sacrificing minority to save the majority, or let the majority suffer. Compassion could cause a seemingly fair distribution of power, because it presumes equality, but in that way it is possible to neglect the required qualifications, that should be taken into account. That is why there are many other qualifications, virtues, professional traits and abilities that should be a part of the best form of governance, apart from compassion.

In conclusion, compassion as the universal human trait, possessed by every man, every human being, is arguable. Its moral value is less arguable, although there is a difference between feeling compassion and acting in accordance with it. But when it comes to governance, different regimes had different success over time, rarely proving that it is easy for a compassion government to rule. Despite not being easy to rule with compassion, should be a part of governance, but only combined with some other important qualities, necessary for those who lead, where professional knowledge and abilities are one of the crucial components.