

## A PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION ON THE MORAL BASES OF HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY.

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### Abstract

**T**his article explored the conceptual underpinning of the philosophical man. It examined the moral framework as a better paradigm for understanding the ethical man as a tissue of possibilities. This philosophical reflection of man employed the ethical principles of morality, education and religion as operative terms; while stressing the relevance of Freudian psychoanalysis as the thematic trials for understanding the role of learning, conscience, and maturity in the synthesis of the moral worth of the ethical man.

**Keyword:** Philosophical man, morality, religion, Human psychology.

### INTRODUCTION

**T**he question, who is man? Is an attempt to discover him in his sanctum. It seeks to discover his essence and his character, where he is present to himself as 'I', as Donceel (1976, p.6) opined. Psychology and Ethics seek to know the true essence of man and how man should, ought to behave. Psychology seeks to understand human and animal behaviour and predicts how these 'animals' behave. The wide scope of psychology's concern and the philosophical differences among psychologists will make it difficult to have a generically accepted definition. Morgan et al., (1984, p.4) hold that "Psychology is the science of human and animal

behaviour; it includes the application of this science to human problems". By implication, it is both a science and an art. As a science, it is a leap into both the unknown, hence "a body of systematized knowledge that is gathered by carefully observing and measuring events." This cannot be complete without categorization and establishment of laws and principles which describe and predict new events. As an art, "it is a skill or knack for doing things which is required by study, practice and special experience." Ethics is according to Fagothey (1959, p.22), "the practical normative science of the rightness or wrongness of human conduct as known by natural reason." When we talk of morality, we refer to a given act which must be a human act and not an act of man, as we tend to evaluate the quality of the act in question, according to which we qualify it as good or bad, wrong or right.

Man is the subject-matter of both disciplines though they differ in their approach and method to unravel the problem of the human essence and the 'oughtness' of his actions. Psychology concerns itself with how the effects of the conscious and willful actions of man are imputed to him. From the point of view of methodology, they operate on different wavelengths in their bid to discover what the essence of man is and how he does what he does. Psychology is empirical relying on observation, usually involving the use of instrument, classification and measurement. Ethics is non-empirical, relying on deduction, and induction occasionally.

This paper has not taken the path of examining one's development from infancy to adulthood rather it wants to examine the role of learning, reward and punishment, and conscience in the development of the human person. One cannot do this successfully without looking at some key terms which are implicitly embedded in our project such as moral, education and religion. I take this position because of my believe and conviction that we need to give religion a definitive role in the education of our children. This means we have to think of moral education as our children are being consciously, systematically and continuously malformed, spiritually dwarfed and hollowed, half educated on account of our indifference to their future and these are the leaders of our nation tomorrow. We have exchanged the future of our children with unrefined, inarticulate policies and material goods. This experiment should be over by now. We supposed to have been tired by now in this costing game of experimenting with our children. Let us then start by looking at our operative terms.

### MORALITY

This word come from the Greek word "ethos" which corresponds to the Latin word "mores", "mos" or "moralis" and what the Igbo call "omenani" relating to customs, morals or usages of a people. Later, it came to mean law or precept. It has come to mean either the body of what is regarded as right or wrong in human action, most especially what is wrong or the theory of what is wrong or the theory of what is right or wrong in human conduct. Hanks (1979) holds that it is:

- The quality of being moral,
- Conformity to conventional standards of moral conduct.
- A system of moral principles.
- An instruction or lesson in morals" (p. 957).

According to Procter (1978, p.706) morality is the "rightness" or "pureness" of behaviour, of an action. "Thomas Aquinas sees it as the moral order, the order which results from the action of a rational nature and therefore related to its last end. Morality is therefore "that code of human conduct which each one by natural inclination sets up for himself", so said Higgins (1949, p.10). Oriason (1968) holds that "morality is the essence of what man ought to be, by reason of what he is" (p.22).

Nature rules the inanimate world and the lower animals through the physical law but man is ruled by the moral law. When natural law applies to man it becomes the moral law. According to Bitle (1950) moral law "... directs free beings to act towards their ends by imposing obligation on the free will" (p.105). This obligation is called moral necessity. By implication it is necessary that we all be moral and always act like moral beings. According to Fagothey (1959, p. 124) moral laws is "... a natural justice.. that is biding on all men even on those who have no association or covenants with each other". This law is not passed on by tradition, not learned rather it is inborn, fitted to our nature, hence right reason. The nucleus of moral law for Kant is duty for duty's sake. He holds that "duty implies that, we are under some kinds of obligation, a moral law, and ... as rational beings we are aware of this obligation as it comes to us in form of imperative." The idea of moral law is based on the idea that human life is teleological. Morality resides in the internal act of the will. This need be carried into the external action of the person, for it is the internal act which communicates its morality to the external act for both form one moral whole. It is impossible to think of morality without thinking of the agent and action and linking them together.

Moral law has three characteristic:- universality, immutability and knowledge. This moral

law is universal; for it arises from being of man. Higgins (1956, p.230) holds that it is that "basis in reason to which all must conform, it is the norm, pointing the way to destiny and touching all conducts, at least indirectly." It shows that the same moral law obtains for every person. It is immutable; it is identical with human nature. We are not talking of the human inclinations rather of the corporeal, spiritual being of man; that very thing which makes him man not something else. This law is knowable. It is right there in the conscience of every normal person. For Higgins the dictates of this law (moral) are not written nor infused into the souls of men by faith but God gave man "the light of reason and endorsed it with a natural facility to discover man's proper good". We may likely get divergent answers if we inquire to ascertain why human beings employs the category of right and wrong. For a group, human dignity requires it, for another, man is a moral animal by dignity requires it, for others it is necessary because it binds men together defining expectations and limiting expectations. No action can be moral without being a human expectations. No action can be moral without being human act and every human must have these qualities, knowledge's freedom and voluntaries presupposes and kind of ideology, theory of meaning, purpose and end of human life and the means of attaining such an end in life.

## EDUCATION

This word if derived from the Latin 'educare' – meaning to bring up, to draw out, to assist at birth as in midwifery. It means to lead out the dark into light (enlightenment). It is equally derived from 'educare' – which means to rear, to bring up, a child physically or mentally. Invariably it means to train and bring up somebody; it is a kind of direction. Socrates in his theory of learning emphasized on reminiscence, by implication education is a midwifery; helping

somebody to remember and bring forth that which is already in him.

Education according to Okolo (1989, p.13) in its general understanding therefore is 'whatever one learns through experience, from self, or others to help one survive and master one's social milieu'. Gremin (1977, p. 7) sees it as "a deliberate, systematic and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge value, attitudes, skills and sensibilities". Werner (1979, p. 13) says it is the "process by which a community preserve and transmits its physical and intellectual character".

Education has the function of integrating the aspect of a individual and making him resource person.

In the words of Krishnamurti (1978, p.25) "its highest function is to bring about an integrated individual who is capable of dealing with life as a whole". According to Scheffler in Peters (1973), education abolishes "distance and detachment, bringing the learner into intimate engagement with the environment to be known."

Man is a tissue of possibilities, this unveils as he grows and live his life. He is full of potentialities; the more these potentialities are developed the more accomplished and educated a person becomes. Education cannot be reduced to formal education, we have informal and non-formal education as well. All of these must blend to give the best. True and authentic education must dispose and aid a person to become mature, free, enlightened, resourceful and to flower in goodness. As man is astride of two worlds – the physical and the spiritual, true education must take cognizance of developing his physical, mental and spiritual faculties. The whole man must be developed or else man is not educated. In the very words of Okere "an intellectual giant who was but a moral dwarf would be regarded not as an educated man but as a monstrosity" in Nduka, et al (1983, p. 54).

## RELIGION

Religion is not very easy to define. It is slippery hence it constantly changes faces and shifts ground. It is a complex phenomenon having dialectical relationships of the mind to reality. It is dialectical because it is both active and passive. As it negates its acquired position, it opens a new dimension in human existence.

Religion has three Latin words as its roots—"ligare" to bind, "relegare" to unite or link, and "religion"—relationship, so said Haring (1964,p.119). Religion is a bipolar phenomenon, on the one end is man and on the other is God (the transcendent Being, he believes in and worships). The concept of transcendent being/deity is real and essential to the concept of religion. For Cicero, it comes from the Latin word 'religare' which means to bind or join. It becomes the link between man and God. ( the totality of man's relations with God). Religion is the centre, "sanctum sanctorum" of man. "it is in it that all questions of meaning, of relevance, find their ultimate answer', so said Okere.

For 'Mathew Arnold', religion is ethics heightened, enkindled, lit up by feeling. "Mortino James" sees it as a belief in an ever living God, that is, in a divine mind and will ruling the universe and hold moral relations with mankind. Bouquet (1941, P.16) holds that it is "a fixed relationship between the human self and some non-human entity, the sacred, the supernatural, the self-existent, the absolute or simply, God". We have to add that whether this non human entity exists or not does not matter, for the religious man it exists.

Scheirmacher (1963, P.12) stressed on this aspect of dependency of man on the deity and sees religion as a feeling of absolute dependency on God. Religion is not feeling; though feeling may play a part in religion and it is not true that man remains passive

in religion, he is equally active; unless rituals are no longer part of religion and worship is removed from religion. Men are astride of two worlds, food nourishes the body while religion nourishes the spirit. It is religion that keeps us balanced in the constant tug-of-war between our physical self and spiritual self; or else we descend to the level of brutes. Religion imposes laws of human conduct geared towards making it possible for man to get at his vision, hence is the stabilizing factor in our individual personality. It is impossible to have a great civilization without a great religion. In the words of Okeke, "The ten commandments have been the silent school of humanity, and religion the real civilizer of man. Religion contains systems of belief, ritual, morals and law; this is why it is very complex coupled with the fact that it involves the three greatest realities in the universe—God, man and the world. Outside ritual, the system of belief and morals are highly connected. The former suggests how men should behave.

We need to stress at this point in time, that religion is absolutely necessary for moral education and development of human being. It is very vital in educating the person if education or moral education, in the strict sense, must have content, vision, direction and be alive. We need equally stress that it is still possible to think of moralizing religion. We are not unaware of some thinkers who have postulated constructs for religionless morality. A right thinking person knows that morality is based even if it is not explicit on a kind of belief system, a transcendent matrix of values and on a kind of relationship — religion. One cannot successfully separate religion from a system of morals, unless one thinks of a code of etiquette. It will be a mark of supine ignorance to see a lesson of civics as being the same with that of morals. Okere holds and rightly too that 'Morality is in fact a belief or value system translated into action. It is the living out of a deeply believed system of

values". One can live or die for his religion because of deep convictions as regards ultimate values, in life and belief in the beyond. This, a code of etiquette or lesson of civics cannot inspire. Having cleared bush, let us move immediately to the core of our paper.

### THE ROLE OF LEARNING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN PERSON

Learning no doubt plays a vital role in the development of an individual for the world itself is a learning scene. Man is 'thrown' into the world to learn how to live in it and relate with his environment and others like him. Procter (1979, P.623) sees learning as "deep and wide knowledge gained through reading and study," Moregan et al., (1979, P.112) hold it is any "relatively permanent change in behaviour which occurs as a result of practice or experience". Four components are involved in learning situations: drives, stimuli, responses and reinforcements. These events together with the child's cognitive structures, determine what he learns and stores for future use, so said Kuppuswamy (1981, P.81). As the child grows up he tends to make use of his initiative in the bid to put forth effort needed to achieve a desired end. As he does this room is created for specialization as he is now free to decide and act. The very "nature" or shape his basic self takes depends on the environment he finds himself more especially on his cultural group values without much reflection on them or without awareness that people of other culture may not share these values.."

It is learning that shapes a child into the 'ideal' person his society expects, as he learns to conform to the societal sanctions and approvals. At times the concern may transcend the ego's entire desire if the state requires the service of the person for example in communist states. It is concisely expressed by Harsh et al., (1959) that "Each person interprets and acts on

the common cultural values within the framework of his own personal experience and history, each put upon these commonly hold values the imprint of his own psychobiological capacities, abilities and habits. . ." Habits form our second nature. Constancy in acts makes the individual more susceptible to such acts in the future. Reinforcement stand a chance of helping the individual to internalize what he has learnt into the core of his personality. This is not different when it comes to the moral aspect of reality; societal norms and values are internalized and substantiated by learning. The individual develops and concretizes his basic self in an environment that supports healthy learning. It is only then that the individual is free and has the power/ability to detach himself from certain norms which he thinks and knows does not fit into the 'ideal' required by him. It is here that he learns to use moral principles as instruments of good actions, for his self interest and possibly development. These may aid in development of trust, respect, loyalty, mutual relationship and principles of equality, justice, reciprocity etc. .

### REWARD AND PUNISHMENT IN DEVELOPING THE PERSON

It is over labouring the obvious to hold that discipline is of vital importance among the factors which play a role in character formation more especially in the child. This involves discipline of the physical and mental selves. Discipline is nothing outside self-discipline. For the child, it need to be integrative capacity of the ego and an external manifestation of this. We cannot dispense with punishment in the upbringing of the child without wrecking the personality of the child and the joy of the family and society eventually. The essential connection between wrong acts and punishment is apparent and clear to a child at times to some animals. Rudolf Aller holds vehemently that punishment is necessary in shaping

the character of the youth. Chinawa (1984, P.11) holds "the receipt of punishment is most interwoven with process of contrition, the recognition of wrong doing and the resolution to avoid it in the future."

Punishment tends to suggest a vision to the punished; that he needs to develop and improve, that means, he is seen as having the ability of over-coming the wrong done. For Fagothey (1959, P.418) "punishment is used not as a means of repaying for crime committed, but only to train or restrain responsible being as well as tending to decrease the likelihood of occurrence of the responses leading to it", A constructive discipline should help the child to redirect an unaccepted impulse, in order to make it compatible with the cultural concept of proper behaviour. Isolating the child from untouchables does not do much as aiding him to rechannel impulses stimulated by untouchables towards a suitable substitute. Josseyen (1955, P.270) holds "Much of the process of maturation is the discovery of ways to express impulses through channelization leading to a goal compatible with reality and acceptable to one's own standards and those of others." Praise, bonuses and rewards used to play an effective role in the upbringing of the child, as they tend to encourage some aspects of behaviour. If his behaviour is reinforced a good number of times he becomes more disposed and even conditioned to behave in such manner. Norsworthy et al (1933, P.326) agrees that "Rewards may function as incentives to action and as potent factors in hastening the learning of desirable conduct."

Social approval is the most permanent of rewards. It is only when a child behaves in a specific and consistent pattern that this is shown. His moral training consists in approving conduct deemed desirable. He needs to be informed why such acts are desirable. Punishment in the form of harsh treatment need to be discouraged. Punishment should be meted

out in accordance with the gravity of the offence committed and the age of the child. Punishment is essentially aimed at improving and developing the offender and serving as a deterrent to others. There are times, a youth commits an offence and expects to be punished. He should be punished or else he would not grow into the 'ideal' person expected of him. Punishment if implemented correctly according to Morgan will not only virtually eliminate a misbehaviour but it will accomplish that elimination faster than any other behaviour reduction procedure. If it is administered correctly and on time it has the tendency of effectively reducing behaviour that makes ones actions in the society inconsistent.

It is immoral to punish one who is not indisputably guilty. Robert (1975, P.8) holds that "a man is morally responsible for his acts if his performances of them can be influenced or modified by reward or punishment". Acts which one performs to avoid punishment, or receive reward, do not flow from conviction hence are not virtuous. We need to bear in mind that the corrective and deterrent functions of punishment are subject to moral scrutiny.

Punishment should be aimed at directing, shaping and improving the character of the child. Though it has an essential role to play in the upbringing of the child as expressed in an adage "spare the rod and spoil the child", punishment must be used with care and caution, sparingly, consistently and should be combined with reward for humanitarian and efficacious reasons.

#### THE ROLE OF CONSCIENCE IN PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

Conscience according to Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English is "an inner sense that knows the difference between right and wrong, judges one's actions according to moral laws, and makes one feel guilty, good, evil", etc. Conscience is always present in

an individual, in the beginning it is latent but as years roll by, it becomes alive and active. Conscience develops with maturity. According to Fagothey (1959, P.46) it is "the practical judgment of reason upon an individual act as good and to be performed or as evil and to be avoided." It is that still voice which does not coax or force you to do good but which continues to point towards the good. Conscience is the super-ego of Freud. Donceel (1979, P.243) makes the distinction between these thus "Super-ego is a social and instinctive agency; conscience is a moral and a rational power. The super-ego would produce a personality completely caked with custom and shackled by tribal mores, it produces conventionality and pseudo-morality. . . . "Conscience is man's intelligence in as much as it judges his actions in the light of reason . . . , it is the basis of mature moral persons."

This term conscience is derived from the Latin word 'consentia' which means knowledge with another', and so 'knowledge with oneself' and 'knowledge within oneself'. Conscience is the inner judge, who reviews past actions and gives judgment of either praise or blame. This sense of self-judgment generates an inner conflict that is universal. Conscience is neither a function of the mind nor will nor emotions as some tend to hold, it is rather an inbuilt function of one's entire personality; hence can be seen as a construct of the society as one is with heredity and environment put together. As conscience grows, fear gives way to self-respect. 'I must' gives way to 'I ought'. Convention gives way to conviction and external discipline gives way to self-discipline. A time will come when the voice of the group (public opinion) gives way to the voice of conscience.

The Super-ego of Freud is the negative aspect of conscience. This super-ego of Freud has a double function which are characteristically negative. Bull (1973, P.55) writes "Unconsciously, it represses intolerable desires and experiences. Consciously, it is

the burden of guilt that is borne of identifications in early childhood, of aggression which had to be inwards upon impulses threatening adult love, and of heteronymous precepts that have become interiorized." It becomes a guiding moral control; not to have such a kind of control is to be morally an imbecile. Problems crop up where conscience is divided on what should be done, where it is irrational against the dictates of reason or where it is unhealthy in its condemnatory function.

Every person wants to be loved, appreciated and accepted. Love is a human vital need, Ogugua expressed this wholesomely in his work "Love" (a human necessity) the Ego-ideal is positive and rooted in the love and not in fear. Hadfield holds that the self-critical function of conscience is denied from the ego-ideal. The self has three sides-as seen by others, ideal self which one wants to get at, and the self as inwardly known.

As one grows he drops the guidance of the super-ego and embraces that of the conscience. For example, when a child does something because his parents told him to do it, he is led by the super-ego. He is still under legalism; he has not reached real morality. If he continues to do same when he has grown because he has realized the need for such, he is led by his conscience because he is now autonomous. One cannot achieve authentic conscience without imbibing the constructive elements of the parent's admonitions.

As a person grows he can discard some values which he assumed in the past and develop new values. At this stage of life, one is always conscious of his actions. Johnson et al., (1965) hold that 'An older, more intellectually mature child is better able to perceive what is expected of him; he can understand the reason for certain restrictions and standard, he is able to generalize a principle and apply it to a variety of situations. More than a younger child, the older

one can comprehend some of the abstract concepts behind social issues-*unselfishness, equality, justice, truth, . . .*"(p. 591) .

### MATURITY AND MORALITY

As a rational being man is equipped with the potentialities of analyzing the substance of every human action as regards morality. It is not difficult for one to know in the face of temptation whether something is wrong or right. The difficulty lies in the moral courage to do the right thing always. The most outstanding reality in our experience therefore is our inescapable feeling and moral sense in every situation to delineate between the bad and the good. Man is an actor in the moral sphere. He is an intrinsic correlate of moral beings subject to moral scrutiny if he has a balanced psychological maturity. If he is not mature, he is kept in bondage by psychological legalism and hence remains unfree. He cannot ask questions that are touchy like, what is good action? What actually is the essence of moral goodness. Freedom renders the will and the entire moral personality autonomous. Kant talked of self-legislation. Aquinas talked of this in notion of virtue as the paradigm of the moral worth of an action and the standard of the moral agent. The free-will is subject to moral obligation. St. Augustine writes "It is the character of their wills... that men are ultimately marked" in Coplestone (1962, P.100). Moral development belongs squarely to the field of psychology. A look at the nature of moral development will prove this. Cross-cultural research, from Piaget to Kohlberg has established several aspects of moral learning. Graham (1972) did stress a good number of issues.

1. Moral development is inextricably linked with general cognitive development.

2. Moral development has stages which in their general outlines are relatively the same cross-culturally.

The stages represent a hierarchy of appreciation of values' and the range of abilities to acquire them.

3. As in all situations, the learners have their individual learning styles.
4. There are several influences in moral acquisition. Such factors as intelligence, sex, religion and class have been correlated with moral learning; for societies, morality is even a function of economic development.
5. As in all forms of learning, reinforcement is always necessary hence, a supportive environment is important in moral acquisition.
6. There is an affective dimension to morality, acquisition of morality involves feeling in Nduka (1983, P.105).

The influence of religion is absent in the life of the learner because in teaching of morality in the traditional way which is autocratic and dogmatic, the characteristics above were ignored. What we had was a set of do's and don'ts which are forgotten no sooner they are learnt. There was little or no effort to inculcate in the learner the underlying principles of behaviour and how these actions can affect one's development and relationship with others. In order to integrate learning into the experience of the learner, provision need to be made to include discussion, questioning and debate. It needs be dialogical.

Rationality and maturity play a vital role in determining moral strategies. It is quite evident that the element of morality has to do with the self-conscious moral agent in his activities as a rational and social agent. Man's existence and his personality do contribute immensely to his moral awakening. Man's

actions transform him and aid him to a greater perfection in his being a being – in – the – world. His intellect and will expose his desires and feelings within situations. It stands to reason that the more rationally, moralist. Kent holds". . . the moral self, the social man, is no special creation coming mysteriously from the hand of God, but the late products of a leisurely evolution" in Coplestone (1962, P. 100).

The moral world is a World of rational beings; it is an active one. The world of choosing and doing things. It is a world where men act on the environment and give a stamp or seal on this environment which can be either negative or positive. Being fully moral necessitates our actions arising out of a consistent character. Bradley insists that ". . . the aim of morality is not only realization of the self but of the self as a whole" in Warnock (1960, P.5). In order to advance one's moral potentials, one should reach out to the principles of morality and follow these.

#### CONCLUSION

The topic at first glance looks contradictory and lacking focus. The distinction between Ethics and Psychology is not necessarily a conflict, it rather does lead to a clearer understanding of the essence of man – the being involved in both disciplines. Both disciplines concern themselves with limited aspects of the human person. Many sciences look at the true nature of man with respect to his rationality. Psychology looks at man as an instinctive, sentient animal who obeys the forces of nature. This alone does not give a whole story of man. It is good therefore to understand his composite nature in order to have a convincing synthesis of this creature called man. Man is not only a problem; he is a mystery, a tissue of possibilities. Psychology which is empirical and scientific cannot exhaust the mystery surrounding this essence. Man is head and shoulder above the

physical world or animal world. He is a soul, spirit and body, his moral worth therefore is more than what psychology or any pure science can discover and understand, he is therefore not a question of psychology but of Ethics – which is a science of morals.

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