THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VALUES AND EDUCATION: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN REALITY

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Abstract

Human beings develop values; values are taught and learned; values and education are intricately related. Since every society desires order, and thus evolves a system of principles that could bring about the realization of such values, such societies, therefore, must develop a scheme to educate its citizens regarding its core values: that there are certain deeds which should never be done, certain freedoms which should never be invaded, and some things which are supremely sacred. This is the basis of education in the transmission of societal values. This article adumbrated that values are the basic elements and foundation for morality. Therefore, the relationship between values and education is that the latter is the only channel for the realization of the former. Consequently, this article examines this relationship (based on Nigerian experience) and posited that for contemporary African nations to succeed in transmitting, especially its core values to its citizens, they must establish effective learning measures and environments. What this means is that such a process should essentially begin with the society itself realizing this need.

Key words: *value; morality; education; learning*

INTRODUCTION

As we settle into the second decade of the 21st century, issues of grave concern have increasingly brought people face to face with questions about values and survival. Millions of people around the world (especially in Africa) battle with their day-to-day existence, trying to obtain food, shelter, and clothing; to redress violence or life-threatening health issues and problems; issues of unemployment, housing, education and health care are a concern to all but those who enjoy substantial wealth and influence in Africa; African people are worried about toxins in their air and environment, and also about water and food; enormous changes in national and global economies are creating an ever widening gap between the rich and the poor; without critical reflections as to whether or not these developments elsewhere in the world are relevant to the its circumstance. African leaders embrace those tendencies expressive of individualism and exploitation. Even worse still, military interventions, civil wars and ethnic conflicts are responsible for the death of thousands in Africa and millions of people each year around the world. Millions more starve to death while their own countries export certain foods, feed grains to livestock and lose arable land to desertification or through the expansion of cities. Species are becoming extinct at a rapidly escalating rate as the oceans are emptied of fish, the forests razed and all manner of hazardous

chemical substances invade the biosphere. In fact, contemporary African conditions consist of degenerate values manifested in palpable poverty and underdevelopment on the continent, as against what was obtained in pre-colonial Africa. This trend needs to be explained.

In African traditional societies, "The fundamental principles of humanitarian morality were part of the very concept of legality (and learning) and had no positive enactment or statute. However clearly it expressed and however clearly it conformed to the formal criteria of validity of a given legal system, could be valid if it contravened the basic principles of morality" (Hart 1958). The above principles were what African cultures embraced in emphasizing morality more than the laws in learning during the colonial era and this practice needs to continue. Moral exhortation, education and formation in traditional Africa is given to children at a very tender age in order to allow them to acquire the habits, attitudes, beliefs, skills and motives that enable a human being to fit into a community. This needs to be reemphasized. Thus each and every aspect of life contributed to the moral formation of an individual. An individual lived in and was part of the community and it was every one's duty to uphold the community's values. Thus, moral values and standards were and still are part and parcel of the community. This needs to be taught to citizens.

Obviously, the current society is plagued with serious moral predicaments arising from disordered moral values, disordered educational foci and poor apprehension of these. Yet, every society desires order and thus evolves a system or principles that could bring about the realization of such values. Moral crises generally have as a cause a philosophical crisis, just as the vision of man has become corrupted occasionally by systematic aggression towards moral principles (Munoz 1996). The ultimate goal of any society is to enhance the essence of man (its members) as social being(s). For this goal to be achieved there has to be committed and authentic individual defenders of humanity or man's course – respect for individual person and dignity. This requirement is a higher moral necessity; and everyone must recognize this responsibility as an obligation. In order to achieve this, every society must develop a scheme to educate its citizens on their core values; thus is the relationship between values and education. There are certain deeds which should never be done, certain freedoms which should never be invaded, and some things which are supremely sacred; such is the basis of education in the transmission of social values. Invariably, values are the basic elements of and foundation for morality. Therefore, the relationship between values and education is that the latter is the only channel for the realization of the former. This position needs to be examined. In the end, it would be discovered that for any society to succeed in transmitting, especially its core values to its citizens, it must establish a firm foundation effective learning measures and environment. Hence, the imperative of this article: it avers that the process could essentially begin by the society itself realizing this need. Thus, in the following paragraphs, it shall be shown, by clarifying the meanings of value and education, and shall proceed to defend that relationship that there exists an intricate but necessary relationship between value and education, that this relationship is inferential.

Values and education

The following question which exemplifies the dilemma facing the African community is: How can the majority of African peoples, who may already feel overwhelmed with day-to-day existence, be taught to understand and feel empowered to make a difference on issues concerning values, immorality and impoverishments? These are issues that concern both values and education.

The term, value means the significance, desirability, or utility of a concept (Garner 2009). Such significance, desirability, or utility could be determined by an individual (personal value) or by the society (social value). In this sense, values are considered in purely ethical terms. Due to this, more specific reference to value would be placed on signification or desirability of something; that thing's being consistent with existing norms and social standards. (Hence, this does not, therefore, consider the legal and economic usages of the concept.) This is because other considerations do not constitute values as a basic trait or pattern to be learned and acted

upon. Values superimpose on the human conscience, sometimes self-evident, and at other times a reflections of nature and God. What constitutes a basic learned pattern or trait implies a social norm – a model or standard accepted by society or other larger group against which someone's or social action is judged; it is thus, a standard for right or wrong behavior. One's conformity could be voluntarily or involuntarily. Norms as values are determined or set by the typical or the most frequent behavior of a group. Following Hans Kelsen, some norms and values as basic ones, could be the basis for other norms. Basic norms therefore, are reflections of basic values.

There are two broad conceptions of value. First, value could be subjective. In this sense, the sole definition of something as a value is to acknowledge some feature of that thing taken into account in decision making; this means that such a feature inclines one to advance it as it as a consideration in influencing choice, guiding oneself and others. Thus, those who perceive values as 'subjective' consider value in terms of a personal stance, believing it as a kind of choice which may be immune to rational argument; which, however, deserves some kind of reverence and respect. But the inexpedience of ethical subjectivism is based on the fact that it will not promote harmony, cooperation and social order. What would it be like if everyone is left to determine what is necessary and right or wrong? Thus, those who think of values as objectives suppose that for some reason, such as the requirement of rationality, God, human nature, or other influence or authority, choice can be guided or corrected from some other independent entity (Blackburn 2006). However, all peoples cherish certain ideas or beliefs which are often called their values. These ideas contain or express the judgments which have of the relative worth or importance of things (Cuber 1968, p. 43). In most African communities, success, cooperation, a good life, peace and order are examples of a few set of values.

The history of the development of human values as virtues could be instructive. Classic writers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle consider values as corresponding virtues of individual psycho-moral being. To them, values stand as explanation of what man truly is. Hence, the "primordial object of the study of values is the true essence of human beings, the idea of a good man" (Simon 1986, p. 21). Yet man is not a static compound, but like reality itself, a dynamic one. In addition, when we speak of values, we speak of creating man. Thus learning and conforming to values is the attempt of man to perfect what he truly is and wills by virtue of nature. Socrates said, 'man, know thyself'. Plato, in the republic mentioned the four cardinal virtues of prudence, courage, temperance, and justice; and Aristotle committed his *Nichomachean Ethics* as a doctrine to the analysis of values and virtues. Thus a value is a virtue – a stable state of character concerned with choice. Cicero ranked these values; Augustine, Aquinas and Philo of Alexandria tried to base them in Christian ethics. Kant and the modernists believe values and virtues to be matter of duty. The Africans derive their conception of values from her conception of man, nature, and her unique spatial-temporal experience preserved by customs and traditions, and transmitted by several institutional agents of socialization in the learning process. This extant tradition, spanning so many centuries, if nothing else, gives support to and corroborates the truth of the doctrine of virtues and values – to its adequacy to reality, and the reality of what man is. They show that moral values should not wane on the face of an individual whim or social corruption.

But the blindness to values, however, varies with different stages of time. However, these values are today more challenged and almost completely replaced by elements of egoism, legalism and protestant Christendom. But values are not rules. Since children learn fast, imagine a moral order where they are instant legalists. They can only build what Freud calls a super-ego. The super-ego moves people to do compulsive things simply for a desired effect; it is not reflective and essentially non-rational: whatever it is, it is not conscious. Yet, values grow out of norms in the lives of people who consistently live by them. This is perhaps why Lewis (1960, p. 73) put it theistically that "we might think God simply wanted simply obedience to asset of rules; whereas He really wants people of a particular sort". Therefore, the doctrine of value implies that of obligation devoid of regimentation and restriction. That is why children and youth require teleological and guided education on values and virtues

in order to establish the kind of being he is suppose to grow into by his doing.

However, since values differ from culture to culture, it could be a reconciliatory position to hold that values are relative and learned in the process of enculturation and socialization. Values are virtues. Some basic African values include peace, charity, temperance, faith, honesty, truth, sincerity, loyalty, trust, objectivity, discipline, hospitality, humility and co-operation, justice, prudence, and fortitude. One of the weaknesses of contemporary Nigerian society is perhaps its inadequate vision of its citizens especially in the area of education on these values. Accordingly, it must be stressed that all societies, to a greater or lesser degree, 'indoctrinate her citizens' (Munoz 1996, p. 19) and this implies education of citizens. In other words, there is a relationship between these values and education because the former is the basis for the latter.

Values are of immense importance to society. According to Peter Geach (1977, p. 12), men need virtues and values for whatever men are for – order and development, hence the universal Declaration on Human Rights and similar statutes to reflect human needs. Thus, a value or virtue is an operative habit that is good. Good habits are formed from interior dispositions not mere instincts. Values reflect inclinations and dispositions, "the accessory quality that enables man to use his potencies or faculties correctly, with ease, promptness and pleasure" (Munoz 1996, p. 28). Man develops values because he is not angel, not pure, but corporeal, a duality of body and spirit. Virtue is the masterpiece of the spirit and because of these limitations within his being, man needs virtues as values. Some believe that the dead will appear in the form of the totem animal of that ethnic group/ community, and these totems are fearsome (crocodiles, tigers, etc). They thus symbolize the terrible punishments the dead can inflict if the moral values of the community are not upheld (Asekhauno 2010). Importantly, these must be taught and learned; hence, according to Plato, a ruler requires special tutoring, training and education.

Education is, formally or informally, the transmission of knowledge and skill. Education and socialization are intricately, if not inseparably, related. But in some respect, education is often thought of in terms of schooling. In other respects, however, effective training for the individual, as both a member of a group or as autonomous individual, is a continuing process. In either case, education and socialization process help in the preservation and transmission of societal values and culture; education and socialization are a stimulus to creative thinking and action, which accounts for possible cultural change; culture change, in turn, may account for loss of some precious cultural values. Accordingly, Brand Blanshard declared that:

What turns knowledge into account is the habit of Trained Reflection; Paschal said that most of the ills of the world were due to the fact that youth of today stand a good chance to alter the trend and direction of events, if only they are prepared to adopt a more rational, intellectual, ethical and pragmatic approach to Africa's prolonged predicament. Here is the task in which the vanguard of struggle are millions of tertiary and secondary institution students, and many more millions who have completed their "education" without the hope of employment for the indefinite future (1977, p. 312).

As much as this view captured the reality of the African condition, it fails, however, to recognize that the learning youth embraces the dictates of the curriculum; secondly, it failed to recognize that the value for employment is consequent upon other basic abilities of the student – such as high aptitude, good moral values and critical thinking ability.

Now, the inculcation and teaching of values at the level of psycho-motor development of one's life could be very instructive in the area of morality. It is normal, fruitful, joyful, and satisfying and indeed reasonable for a man or a group of people to pause and puzzle at times and re-examine the basis of their existence and action; their life style or pattern; the goals which they are pursuing in life; including their means of pursuing those goals or ends which they set for themselves. Little wonder Socrates spelled out in one of Plato's dialogues that "an unexamined life is not worth-living". Lacking in such self-reflection, re-examination and self-critique, Nigeria has degenerated as a nation where immorality has eaten deep into

the fabric of society to the point where the younger generation now consider immorality as part and parcel of culture. But immorality is a mark of degenerate value; degenerate values are a mark of improper education and ignorance; then, immorality is mark of improper education. It is only moral to live according to useful social values. What then, is morality?

Etymologically, the word 'morality' is derived from the Latin word mores which translates in English as "custom or way of doing things in a society" (Echekwube 1999, p. 15). Morality signifies the concept or doctrine of human actions as right or wrong, for example, it is concerned with the question of right and wrong in human behaviour. Simply put, "morality constitutes that sphere of the human beings activity (culture) in which he is obliged to make an appraisal of human behaviour in terms of the good (to reach an agreement of the theoretical judgement with practical judgement)" (Krapiec 1983, p. 224). Morality concerns obligatory relationships involving human being. It deals with how the person acts in relationship to others. Every moral act is, therefore, an act of a person as a subject in relationship to a person, another human being, and precisely to the other as its objects. Here the human person has the highest value, and his dignity constitutes the criterion of moral good in so far as this moral good anticipates "the common good" (Zdybicka 1977, p. 198). From these explanations, it follows that morality refers to the rational actions of human beings living in society in terms of the good to be done and evil to be avoided, in terms of social values.

It is critical to remark that "no man is an isolated being unto himself; he must live in society (because his essence is social being) and interacts with his fellow human beings. Such interactions carry a lot of consequences. At times, it may lead to conflicts as Hobbes (1968, p. 22) once pointed out thereby rendering the pursuit of common good difficult. Accordingly, there is then the need to set up norms, principles of ethics or ethos that will guide and protect man from the brute selfishness of others and also curb and dismantle his own excessive egocentric predicament. In sum, morality deals with the rational conduct of human beings living in society in the light of natural reason and social values. This is positive morality.

The negative moral principles, on the other hand, spell out more specifically the evil to be avoided. Thus, "they tell us not to kill, not to commit adultery, not to tell lies, not to steal, not to cheat, not to commit suicide, neither to commit incest, nor to embezzle public fund, neither to take nor give bribes, not to be cruel, not to be callous, not to commit rape, etc." (Omoregbe 1989, p. 14). These principles are universal. They are valued at all times and in all parts of the world. There is no culture or society in the world which encourages murder, stealing, rape, telling lies, etc., as virtues, nor is there any society or culture, which endorses kindness, honesty, justice, altruism, hospitality, as vices. Because of the importance of morality in the life of every society, it should not be left to individual interpretation (Ukagba 1993).

Consequently, through education, the Nigerian youth should acknowledge the bases of morality. He should be able to know that he ought to be moral and responsive to values for certain reasons – including the fact that (a) God commanded it – value of respect to the divine; (b) it is part of man's rational nature – value of respect for human nature; (c) it is useful for common interest – value for cooperation; (d) there is need to avoid cosmic retribution/nemesis – value for good effects; (e) it promotes happiness – value for happy life; and (f) it is a duty – value for work.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Remove character formation from the training of students, and what do we have, cheaters at examinations, cultists, rapists and dishonest students. At the present, our tertiary institutions train students only in skill acquisition. What about character formation? The most pressing question for any university or other tertiary institution is: What kind of men and women come out through her doors? Are our universities (or other tertiary institutions) doing enough to produce men and women of culture and character? The answer is negative. We may concur with Socrates and Plato that if a man knows the real consequences of evil, he would refrain

from doing it. But such arguments presume that once people know about values and the virtues, they will refrain from them. No, to the contrary, in fact, some people perhaps due to an unfortunate childhood experience are in their adulthood so childishly and calculatingly selfish, that nothing can make them selfless whether they profess any moral principle or not.

The relationship between value and education is not only necessary but logical. In the first place, education is meant to instill skill and knowledge, which is necessary for production and the rendering of services. Production and service rendering are meant to satisfy the human value for self-preservation. These human values are obtained through education. So while values are learned through education, education is itself a value. Without one, there is not another. Conveniently, one could say that the relationship between values and education is necessary because it is two-pronged.

An education on values is necessary for development. The point being made is that morality is at the heart of the growth and development of any institution or human civilization. Nigeria is no exception. The basic claim is that Nigerians, or any group for that matter, in order to grow politically, socially, and economically, must be committed to inculcating sound moral principles. Let it be clearly stated and emphasized that success, efficiency, and improved performance in our social life must out of necessity be human and moral. The issue of success, efficiency, improved productivity, and high performance cannot be separated from relevant ethical considerations. We have to redefine these key concepts within the context of their human origin to incorporate the ethical, without which there can be no real sustainable civilization as we know it. According to Nwodo (1998):

We have to stop pretending that the injustice we do to others is deserved by them. We cannot continue to pretend to be happy knowing that what we are doing is morally wrong.

The real lesson is that,

We must accept it as a guiding principle that there are right and wrong ways of conducting one's life and of doing things; and that it pays to be morally good because there is a stringent demand that we live the morally good life, a demand that is neither arbitrary nor a matter of personal opinion but rather something that springs from some abiding principle in man's own nature (Fagothey 1981, 2).

Those who act immorally violate or destabilize this abiding principle, destroy a value and upset the objective moral order.

Most people, when their selfish interest is involved, cannot be persuaded to by these rational considerations. For such people education and knowledge of the virtues and values is irrelevant. Some people are naturally immune to reason and have to be threatened, persuaded and brawl-beaten into behaving morally. Some others are even immune to these methods. Such people may never be aided by education or deterrence. What they need is a different type of therapy which they can receive while reclining on the psychiatrist's couch. Thus, education on values and the virtues may not be the end, but a means to some end.

Western values were introduced to Africa (Nigeria) through education, and that directed our minds away from 'home cultures'. According to Onwubiko (1991, xii), it "was very well calculated to teach the new Africans that in order to rise in the ladder of the new culture and acquire the status it promised, they must be alienated ideologically and physically from their root cultural past...." But Lambo (Kanu 2010) criticizes this fact in that "the Africans find it difficult to conceive a man as a purely contemplative being: for them, human qualities presuppose a world of human relations. Thus the influence of group consciousness is recognized as the motivating idea and thought". What this means is that Western individualism taught to Africans, perhaps, was against the social and communal nature of African man.

The African man has respect for moral, religious, economic, and aesthetic values in their sense of good human relationships, sense of community, sense of hospitality, sense of respect for authority and the elders, sense of extended family, and sense of religiosity (Kanu 2010). Consequently, we must develop human beings who can act generously,

patiently, tolerantly, and lovingly. At the present, we do not have such human beings in sufficient numbers to construct an economic form that values justice, uprightness, wisdom, tolerance, and loving patience. We need to create men and women ready to give without reciprocity; we need to teach compassion even in the face of biting capitalist forces; we need a youth built on the strong belief that loving kindness requires tolerance of others' needs, habits, likes and dislikes; men and women who recognize that an emergent practical moral order built on thoughtfulness and practice is a desideratum. The teaching of these values should be the main focus of our educational pursuit.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflict of interest to disclose.

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