

The individual's moral character

Experience, Human Nature



The word "character" although it has many definitions is a little vague to specifically pin point what it exactly means. Psychologically defined by Freud, as paraphrased by Peck et tried to single out a scientific definition for the character and according to him, "character is a Everything has a character. Yet, what makes humans unique is the "human character" that they possess: "a characteristic mode of human behavior in that sphere which distinguishes man from animal" (Roback 158) However, a character can be a bad one and it is not a good distinction for human beings to have a bad character.

Thus, humans have the so-called moral character that enables him/her to distinguish between right or wrong and to choose which path he/she would take. Moreover, according to Peck et al. (1), "William the major determinants of character." This means that intention is very important in determining the moral character of an individual. A good view of a positive moral character a human being can exhibit is when he/she chooses to stay away from wrong and be righteous with the best efforts that he/she can make despite the temptations of committing an act against righteousness.

Simply stated, it is his/her "intention" to be a person of good moral and to be righteous. This is the case of Jenny. Jenny was working as the head accountant of a certain company and thus she is highly paid. She lived good and could afford an expensive lifestyle courtesy of her generous salary. However, Jenny discovered one day that the company she worked with had always made tax evading practices to lessen and not pay the taxes due the government. Jenny resigned as the head accountant although she has to live

a different life which is considered as "not so good" compared to her life as the head accountant with a good salary.

It can be said however that Jenny sacrificed a good life for a good reason. It was her intention to be righteous and thus, she is an individual with a good moral character. The case of Jenny is only one among the many possibilities where a good moral character can be exhibited. Correspondingly, a person or an individual may have a bad moral character if he/she does the opposite given the same situation as that of Jenny.

A person's moral dimension, the "matters of what is fair, right, just and virtuous," (Folsom: Fenstermacher, 1990, p. 133) is very important in his/her moral character aspect as it is where his/her motivations and intentions may emanate. Since every individual has his/her own moral dimension, a moral or an immoral act therefore is the sole result of a person's character. Why? It is because "you can't teach character, it's something that you either have or you don't have." (Stoll, and Beller) This means that character is somewhat inherent in an individual's existence although character is not simply an in-born thing.

Simply stated, a person can be very well educated, was raised in a good or well-natured family and he can be also intelligent but if his motivations and intentions in life and towards his fellow human beings are something unacceptable for the moral law or something that simply violates others in a way or another, that person does not have a good character. Indeed character is not learned and it is strongly from an individual's heart. The moral qualities of an individual are easily observed from his acts. However, it

is worth noting that what is acted is not really what is intended by an individual.

Nowadays, it is not uncommon that some individuals use a mask to pretend what they are not and this is surely a character without a good moral. Since intention and motivation are the main determinants of a morality of a character, this means that two individuals doing exactly the same thing can have varying moral characters. If Mr. Guy and Ms. Gal are both president of their respective charitable foundations and they both want to raise money from their own respective corporations to support the charity institutions, what determines their moral characteristics are their respective intentions.

If Mr. Guy donates to charity because he wants to help and making others happy through his help motivates him to even perform better, he is a righteous and a person of good moral character. If Ms. Gal, on the other hand, only wishes to reduce her taxable income in the corporation and uses the charitable foundation to do it and to make a free publicity as to her business and to make her business even more profitable, even though in the end she did help the charity and its beneficiaries, her acts cannot be considered as purely of good moral.

Finally as what Aristotle have stated, " Character is the life of right conduct--right conduct in relation to other persons and in relation to one's self. "(Lickona 239) An act can be a right conduct in relation to other persons but if the intentions and motivations of the person doing the act knows that what he/she does is in fact directed toward other ends and purposes, the act becomes a conduct of no good moral. Therefore, no one can judge an

individual's character for only he/she knows what is his/her true intentions for doing something.