

Morality of human development: a case for african moral humanism assignment

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MORALITY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: ACASE FOR AFRICAN MORAL

HUMANISM By Alloy S Ihuah PhD Department of Rel. and Philosophy Benue State University, Makurdi. Nigeria. Introduction Human nature, ethicists are agreed, is constituted of reason and passion. Thus, man may be properly defined as a moral being whose actions are either morally rights or morally wrong. Taken as the products of man's reason, that is, theoretical knowledge, which is episteme, and the principles of action, that is practical knowledge which is techne, contemporary science and technology have their ultimate end in the perfection of the whole man.

Thus, if contemporary science and technology must receive credibility as an action of human rational action, its ultimate finality must coincide with that of the destiny of man that is the advancement of the good of the whole human person. Science and technology assumes a proper direction only as far as it achieves the integral good of man, in his/her material and spiritual goods, the two poles between which the human being is caught.

A genuine ethic for science and technology consists in a true normative science of human conduct that promotes both the material pole which in reality, the shadow of personality and a spiritual pole which does concern true personality, the meaning and bountifulness of man, the form or the soul of the whole being, man. In this regard, ethical principles concern themselves with the norms of standard of human behaviour along the line of the moral law with the sole aim of advancing the integral good of the human person.

This paper attempts a critical evaluation of the morality of human actions. In so doing, we shall undertake an analysis of such ethical theories like moral positivism, ethical hedonism, intuitionism, utilitarianism and categorical imperative. Moral humanism shall be advanced here as a moral theory which brings out the essential features of morality neglected by other ethical perspectives. In itself, it is a morality that is determined by the full, integral development of the human being as a human being.

In its essential feature, this ethical paradigm directs the endeavors of the man of science and technology away from dehumanization and depersonalization towards human sustainable living. Ethical Decision and the Concept of Moral Value All of us constantly face certain kinds of situations, which is usual to call moral or ethical. Clearly as we recognize or classify such situations as moral, we are not always sure whether our classification is right or wrong. In fact, apart from philosophizing, we are not likely to be very concerned with such clarification.

So diverse in nature and context are such situations that we may fail initially to see them as having anything in common. Still, ethical problems are related, and if we give heed, less to the new situations than to the questions they raise, we will see that in these very questions is found the relatedness that links diverse situations as ethical ones. And ethical reflection, we may say, is directed toward certain kinds of questions about human situations and problems, no matter how diverse they may seem.

What is it, then, that constitutes an ethical? ‘ Ethics’ is derived from the Greek word ‘ ethos’ which means “ character” and, in the plural, “ manners”.

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The synonym morals derive from the Latin 'moralis', which Cicero used to render the Greek 'ethikos' and also means "character" and "manners" or "customs". Such etymologies suggest that the ethical refers to one's own relationship (character) to his and other's manners and customs. In reference to philosophical usage, this is partly right, yet partly misleading.

Ethical experience and reflection are about human conduct but, what is omitted is the problem of evaluation, of judging by reference to the right and the good; the fundamental principles of the moral law (Omoregbe, 2003: 4). Thus, ethics is a normative science of human conduct concerned with the way men, in all their endeavours, ought to behave, it is the norms of conduct to which human action ought to conform. Thus, ethical situations, we may say, involve human actions rather than mere behaviour and response; or, as an older terminology had it, they are voluntary rather than involuntary.

Within the domain of voluntary, we find four factors or data whose presence define situations as ethical more fully: The first of these is the experience of choice i. e. an agent's act of volition in deciding between two or more alternatives (Ozumba, 2001: 3). This datum is very difficult to treat briefly, for discussions of it often turn quickly to one of the most vexing and difficult of all philosophic problems, that of free will. But clearly, every ethical situation involves making a choice.

Indeed, whether one believes in determinism or not, one is still faced with a situation in which he believes that (i) there are alternatives; (ii) that s/he is called upon to choose because the outcome of the situation depended to some degree upon one's choice, and (iii) one is in a situation in which he

could act otherwise. Apart from some such experience, one would hesitate to call any situation a moral one. And it is just for this reason also that we can say that the possibility of choice is a necessary condition of the moral experience.

The second observation to make about the experience suggested in the illustration is that the issue of choice and the outcome of action are related to the question of value i. e. something that is desirable either for its own sake or for the sake of other ends which will aid in realising a particular goal. Values, or what was believed to be valuable, were at stake; goods and evils were set in opposition to each other. Such a concern with values is another identifying mark of ethical experience. A value (or good) is whatever is approved, esteemed, or desired.

Enjoyment is often taken as a rough synonym of value. Disvalue is evil or that which is disapproved. Now people differ in what they take to be of value: Miss Adams said it was life itself, others said happiness, or utility, or individual development. Such differences of opinion about what is valuable suggest a distinction between what might be called a true value and a false or only apparent value. A true value, if such can be found, would be one, which has been judged so by an adequate criterion of value. Ozumba calls it intrinsic value, which refers to desiring things for their own sake e. . happiness, when it is regarded as the ultimate (Ozumba, 2001: 4). Third, we find in our illustration the idea of obligation, of what ought to be, and therewith the concept of right as against wrong. Of course, the participants in the debate differed about what ought to have been done, and they

therefore differed about what they considered to be right and wrong in the situation. Still, it is because of a sense of obligation, a belief that some choices are right, others wrong, that we can speak of Haiselden's action as moral at all.

Philosophers have interpreted the nature, meaning, and role of this datum of obligation differently, though almost all of them have believed it be a central factor for morality. Sometimes, as with Immanuel Kant, the experience of obligation is seen to be the very core of the moral experience, so that obedience in action to the necessities of duty constitutes the moral experience, and defines duty and rightness as well. For other philosophers, value experiences is more basic, so that for them what ought to be is determined by what is recognized as valuable.

The fourth and final datum we find in our illustration is the rule ??? the moral law or principle to which one can appeal to judgements of the possible goodness or rightness of an action. Moral Laws are not always quite so explicit as they are in this illustration, but possible reference to a principle is taken by many philosophers as another necessary condition for the moral experience in order to identify what people believe are true values and valid, binding obligations. In our illustration, we find the data of choice, value, obligation, and principle essential to the moral experience.

They constitute that experience, though they also pose the problems that concern us as we reflect on the human situation involving them. We ask about values: Are there any values, which we and perhaps all men should acknowledge? In what ways are values binding on us? Are there distinctively

moral values, and how may they be related to other values? We wonder about obligation: what is our duty? What basis or justification does it have? And we ask about principle: is there a moral law, which is definitive for human beings in their choices and decisions?

As we become more reflective on these and similar questions about the data of morality, we become at the same time more philosophical about them. To understand the content and contexts of morality and make moral evaluations and decisions we are compelled to go beyond actual principles and discuss the nature of morality and moral value itself and attempt a discerning analysis of ethical theories. Approaches to the Concept of Moral Value To understand the science of human conduct and make moral evaluations entails much more than actual principles. Taking a cue from the case study above, one is wont to argue that making value judgement in any human experience compels us to go beyond actual principles to a critical evaluation of morality and moral value itself. Before we analyze the mainstream ethical theories, we shall critically examine three basic approaches to the concept of moral value, namely, the objectivists, subjectivists and the emotivist approach. Concerning each approach, we shall ask two questions: i) What is the point of the approach? ii) Is the analysis in question adequate and helpful in resolving ethical issues? The Objectivist Approach

The objectivists approach in its modern version is closely associated with the name of George Moore, an English philosopher. This approach views moral concepts as referring properties or intrinsic qualities. In his book entitled

Principia Ethica, Moore declared: “ It appears to me that in Ethics, as in all other philosophical studies, the difficulties and disagreements, of which its history is full, are mainly due to a very simple cause: namely, to the attempt to answer questions without first discovering precisely what question it is which you desire to answer’. Moore, 1903: vii) What Moore really wanted to know was: What is a moral judgement? When we say ‘ Sophia acted rightly’, what are we saying? In order to answer such questions adequately Moore proposed that we must do two things: we must discover these features which are common and distinctive of all moral judgements. We must discover these “ properties”, “ characteristics” or “ qualities” which all moral judgements share. Thus, Moore writes: ‘ My business is solely with that object or idea which I held rightly or wrongly, that the word is generally used to stand for.

What I want to discover is the nature of that objects or idea, and about this I am extremely anxious to arrive at agreement’ (Ibid: 10). According to Moore there are two types of judgement applicable to ethical decisions: (i) Judgements of Instrumental Value, that is, judgements to the effect that something leads to something having intrinsic value. Thus, if I say, ‘ Money is good’, ‘ Education is valuable’ or ‘ the presidential system is commendable’, I may be saying so because money, education and presidential system are good because they lead to values that are intrinsically good, i. . good in themselves. (ii) Judgements of Intrinsic Value, that is, judgements that declare that something is good-in-itself. Thus, I might say ‘ education is good’, ‘ honesty is commendable; or religion is good’ because without reference to anything else education, honesty and religion are good. That is

to say that something is good in itself without reference to exterior factors.

Between both judgements there are certain differences: i) Instrumental judgements declare that something is good in so far as it leads to something good in itself.

But judgements of intrinsic value declare that something is good without any such reference. ii) In the case of instrumental judgement, evidence can be adduced indeed must be adduced in order to vindicate them. But in the case of judgements of intrinsic value no evidence may be adduced on their behalf. For example, if I say that Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is good, I can mean it is so because it helps me to pass an exam or is good for passing the time or because it tells me much about Nigerian society in transition etc.

Now all of these reasons may be described as instrumental judgements which may or may not be true, which can be vindicated or refused by appealing to facts etc. But, if I say that the book is simply good then I can adduce no evidence in favour of that statement and I cannot convince the other person to see it that way by adducing evidence. He either 'sees' it as I do or he does not. Since all ethical judgements are ultimately judgements of intrinsic value, judgements of instrumental value are ultimately based on judgements on intrinsic value and no ethical judgement is adequately based unless it includes judgements of intrinsic value.

It is here important to ask whether the objectivist analysis of moral value is adequate. If the concept of goodness or any other moral value is to be treated as if it were a property, a quality or characteristic that is recognizable, then the concept of goodness follows the logical behaviour of

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all property concepts like yellowness, heaviness, hardness etc. This does not mean that we 'see' goodness like we might see yellowness or feel heaviness as that of the weight of a box. The concept of goodness refers to the non-sensuous perception of a supra-sensible concept or property.

This is clear in the sort of words Moore uses to describe the type of knowledge in question: "awareness", "apprehension", "recognition", "acquaintance" ??? words which suggest a strong analogy with sight or touch. If the concept of goodness is a simple, unanalyzable property as Moore claims, goodness the fundamental concept in ethics then, the only way I can teach it is by example. I cannot provide a defining meaning of it in terms of other properties because then, it would be neither simple nor unanalyzable.

The only source of disagreement concerning the recognition of such a property can only be based on linguistic differences, that we are really using language in different ways and perhaps with different meanings. Apart from such difference the only source is either in deception or organic defect. Consequently, when we talk about properties like yellowness or heaviness we can argue rationally about them and disagree about them until all the facts are known at which point there is no further room for disagreement because this is what we mean by a property or quality.

But if ethical concepts like goodness are interpreted in this fashion we can account for the genuine rationality of ethical discussions. We cannot account for a distinctive characteristic of ethical discussions; disagreement can persist even when all the facts are known. The objectivists approach can explain the possibility of ethical agreement because since ethical concepts

are like properties and characteristics, once all the facts are known agreement about characteristics and properties is inevitable. But it cannot explain the continuation of disagreement when all the facts are known.

And this is what frequently happens in the case of ethical disagreements.

Subjectivist Approach The characteristic feature of all subjectivist approaches to the analysis of moral concept is that in some way ethical concepts are reduced to subjective relations; that ethical concepts are relative either to the speaker, or to a group or an age. Thus, for example, we say “ Maureen is faithful”, ‘ The meat is nice”, or “ The drink is refreshing”. The concepts here ??? faithful, nice, refreshing ??? refer to particular groups or individuals; they presuppose some referent to which they are related.

Some concepts differ from words like ‘ square’, ‘ red’, ‘ extended’ which are typically property words (objectivist). There are many typically subjective relational words like ‘ loyal’, ‘ faithful’, ‘ devoted’, ‘ patriotic’ and the like. We may even add words like ‘ next to’, ‘ near’, ‘ pleasant’, ‘ fatiguing’, all of which refer to a relational referent and cannot be understood until that relational aspect is known. When we say that a concept is a subjective relation we claim that its frame of reference is always related either to an individual or a group.

Thus a concept, as a subjective relation, either reports on the views or feelings of an individual or a group. What distinguishes concepts as subjective relations is that it is an essential part of their meaning that they refer either to some group or individual. Patriotism cannot be understood except in relation to a particular country so that before you can describe an

act as patriotic you must know many things. For example, a man blows up a large ammunitions factory. Someone asks “ was the act patriotic? ” There is no clear way of resolving the question until a number of factors are known, e. g.

What country owned the factory” Why did he blow up the factory? ??? may be he did it by accident or he was paid to do it. May be he did it because he was a traitor. Who was he? If, for example, I say that philosophy lecturers have an appreciation for classical music and I analyse this statement as a subjective relation, all I am saying is that a certain group of people have feelings of appreciation for classical music. In fact I am saying nothing about the music itself. Let us consider a further example. If I say “ ice cream is nice” or “ beer is refreshing”, I am simply recording the fact that ice cream pleases me or that drink restores me.

But what about a person who detests sweet things or a person who has already taken five or more bottles of beer? In these latter cases you could hardly describe ice cream as nice or beer as refreshing. We may, therefore, sum up this brief analysis of ethical concepts as subjective relations by making the following points: – Ethical concepts, as subjective relations, essentially refer to a frame of reference that is either a group or an individual. – Reasoned discussion concerning issues in such an analysis can only be concerned with the existence of opinions or desires.

But such discussions cannot be concerned with the quality either of the opinions or desires because in all cases the frames of reference are logically different. – If issues are discussed according to an analysis that treats ethical

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concepts as subjective relations then even if all the facts are known, disagreement may still persist because the frame of reference is different in each case. – If disagreements do persist such disagreements cannot be reasoned disagreements since, as already stated, the frames of references differ in each case. If agreement is achieved it merely signifies the fact of the coincidence of desires and the alignment of opinions. – If we apply the analysis of concepts as subjective relations to ethical concepts we discover that such an analysis runs into certain difficulties. This is more so when we take moral concepts as reporting a feeling the speaker has a) If goodness, for example, refers to an individual's feelings of approval then to say "X is good" means "I have a certain feeling of approval toward X. This means that I ask similar questions about good as I ask about relational concepts. "Is this refreshing?" etc.

When it comes to a question of subjective relations at this level no reasoned disagreement is possible. But we know that when we disagree on ethical issues that we do give reasons. We do not merely state that "it is good for me". Consequently an analysis of ethical concepts reducing 'good' to subjective relations has to be rejected because it does not cater for the obvious fact that different people validly and meaningfully disagree about ethical matters. b) If goodness is a subjective relational concept, then, two people would never mean the same thing when they state "X is good". For in each case 'good' means 'good for me'.) In fact it could mean that no person could ever mean the same thing at different times. For 'good' means 'This is now approved by me'. d) No argument could, in any degree, be relevant to supporting or casting doubt on the justifiability of say ethical

judgement unless it could be directed at showing that the person who makes the judgement has made a mistake about his feelings or his opinions. But in ethical matters: Firstly, I am not just concerned whether I have a feeling. It should be the right feeling. Secondly, it is a fact that people often use the same language and argue about the same things in ethical contexts.

Thirdly, people do bring arguments to support their assertions ??? not only in the sense of psychologically disposing each other ??? but as real proofs that “ X ought to be approved” independently of my feelings. (ii) Moral Concepts as Reporting Feelings or Opinions which the Group Shares Against this version of the subjective relation theory there are two formidable facts about ethical discourse: a) When I state I am doing the right thing I realize that it is not merely the same as saying “ my group feels that this is the right thing to do”.

In fact I may think I am right in cases even when I do not think that the members of the group have the required feeling towards my action. b) I may be in doubt that the action is right even when I do not doubt that the group has the required feeling toward it. These considerations bring out the point that whatever a man is feeling when he is feeling an action to be right, he is certainly not merely feeling that his society has in general a particular feeling toward it. When one is in doubt about the rightness of an action it is not merely about the fact as to whether many or any at all have the required feeling.

It is clear that the theory accounts for disagreement in ethical discussions because according to it, ethical positions are a matter of feelings even if

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seemingly reasonable feelings. So the theory does supply a deficiency we already noted in the objectivists' theory, namely, when all the facts are known, disagreements persist. The subjectivist theory however, is not acceptable because even though disagreements persist in ethics they are merely matters of feeling, but not reasoned disagreements. In fact the subjectivist theory does not give adequate place to the role of reason in ethics.

If and when moral concepts are reduced to subjective relations, then, there is no possibility of reasoned disagreement on ethical issues as such even though there may be disagreement about many features of the matter. In other words since moral concepts are treated as reports on feelings, there can always be disagreement, but since such concepts are relational there can be no reasoned disagreement because of the different frames of reference in each case. The Emotivist Approach The emotivist approach to the analysis of moral concepts is based on its general theory of meaning.

Emotivists assume that empirical verification is the sole criterion of sense and meaningfulness. By this they mean that unless the truths declared by statements can in some way be experienced they have no literal meaning and, therefore, cannot be considered as either true or false or matters concerning which there can be rational discussion. Thus, if I claim "there are spirits in the trees", the statement according to the Emotivists, is meaningless because nobody has and can experience the nature of a spirit, that is, a space-less, time-less, untouchable being.

Now, according to the emotivists, all genuine propositions must not only be declarative, they must also be empirically verifiable: a genuine proposition in stating that such and such is or is not the case. In fact Emotivists distinguish three kinds of propositions, namely: (1) tautologies, that is proposition whose meaning is clear from an analysis of the internal relationship between the subject and predicate. Thus, all mathematical and logical prepositions are tautologies.

Then there are (2) meaningless statements, that is, statements which are neither tautologies nor empirically verifiable and yet claim to state something that may be either true or false. Thus “ God is infinite” is an example of a meaningless statement. According to the emotivists, ethical statements are not empirically verifiable, they assert nothing. In the words of A. J. Ayer, one of the architects of the Emotivist theory, If a sentence makes no statement at all, there is obviously no sense in asking whether what it says is true or false. And we have seen that sentences, which simply express moral judgements, do not say anything.

They are pure expressions of feeling and as such do not come under the category of truth or falsehood. They are unverifiable for the same reason as a cry of pain or a word of command is unverifiable because they do not express genuine propositions (Ayer, 1936: 105). Thus, to say “ X is good” is to explain or express an emotion of approval like ‘ hurray’ or ‘ well done’. But it neither refers to a property nor reports on a feeling because there is literally nothing to refer to or report on, that is, if you claim that ethical

statements, as such, refer either to properties or feelings about which we can reason.

The argued position here is that moral judgements have no literal meaning and as such, can be neither true nor false, valid nor invalid. What, then, is the role of reason in ethics according to the emotivists? Certainly reasons may help in adducing facts in order to support a claim. Reason may help in attempting the refutation of another's claim. But the claims themselves are not rational and the relationship between facts adduced by reason is not logical or rational, but purely psychological and emotional. We argue about the truth or falsity of the facts.

We may query the evidence brought forward by the opposition. But once all such preliminary steps are taken, reason has no further role to play not because, as George Moore claimed, ethical statements refer to matters that are ultimately intrinsically good but because there simply is nothing 'intrinsic' or otherwise to refer to. And the same applies to the analysis of moral concepts as subjective relation. What such statements do is they induce, enhance, express or alleviate emotion. But they have no logical or rational role as such.

In the true opinion of Omoregbe (2003: 19), this theory amounts to a reduction of ethics to subjectivism. It denies the objective reference to ethical terms, thereby removing objectivity from ethics. Far from Ayer's Smacks of inconsistency in respect of the theory, C. L. Stevenson argues that ethic agreement and disagreements are common because value, the subject matter ethics, is the kind of thing that is disputatious. He sees moral

judgements as expressing and not reporting attitudes. Moral statements, therefore, evoke certain attitudes and persuades the hearer to adopt similar attitudes (Ozumba, 2001: 109).

Thus, moral disagreement is, therefore, a genuine attribute of ethics because men have different beliefs, the ingredients that inform attitudes. The emotivists theory shares many of the advantages of the Subjectivist approach. But it is different from that approach because whereas the Subjectivist looks on moral concepts as reports on feelings etc, the Emotivist goes further to say that ethical statements do not even report feelings; they evince and express feelings. The Emotivists made a major contribution in distinguishing ethical disagreements from disagreement about facts.

The work of such philosophers has done much to elucidate some distinctive characteristics of ethical concepts. They clearly brought out the distinction between ethical claims and claims about empirical facts. But the Emotivists overstated their case by denying all literal significance to ethical concepts. When people make ethical claims they are not merely expressing their inner feelings about something, they are saying that there is something objectively good and commendable or objectively bad and uncommendable. Indeed, moral statements are meant to state objective facts about the moral nature of actions..

We, therefore, reject the emotivist theory as an adequate analysis of ethical concepts. Our examination of the three different forms of analysis of moral concepts reveals that, while each of them is helpful in its own way, none is adequate. Rather than repeat the criticisms we have already noted, we

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concentrate here on some of the assumptions that underlay these theories. We note that the objectivist theory catered for the role of reason in morality by analysing moral concepts as referring to properties or intrinsic qualities. While there was something 'in' the object, reason had a role to play.

Likewise the subjectivists' theory in translating moral concepts as feelings and attitudes accounted for the role of reason as long as there was something 'in' the subject. But since according to the emotivists ethical statements as such refer to nothing either 'in' the object or subject, reason had no role to play. Two underlying assumptions here have led to confusion. Philosophers have assumed that in order for reason to have a role in morality, there must be 'something' either 'in' the object or subject. It is because of this same assumption that Emotivists eliminate reason from ethics altogether.

Furthermore, the theories in question have been exclusive where they should have been openly comparative. Instead of saying moral concepts are like properties, like feelings, and like exclamations, they claimed they were exclusively properties, feelings, or exclamations as the case may be. Clearly, there are valuable elements of truth in the theories we have examined. The problem now is whether we can supplement them while retaining their strengths and avoiding their weaknesses. In connection with this possibility we may look on moral concepts as openly comparative.

As far as the role of reason is concerned, we may describe them as gerundival, that is, as concepts stating that X or Y are worthy of approval. Thus, to say 'X is good' is to say that X is like a property, a feeling, or like an

exclamation. But strictly speaking, as a reasoned form of discourse, it is more reasonable to say there are solid reasons worthy of approval in favour of X or Y. Given, therefore, that we have accounted for many of the formal aspects of moral values and given that we have retained a role for reason in matters strictly ethical, we must now enquire into the sort of reasons that constitute moral reason.

This leads us to the question of the standards of morality as variously expressed in theories. Analysis of Ethical Theories From our discussion thus far we have discovered certain things about moral values. First of all, in some sense, moral values are objective apart from the facts that are related to them because even when all the facts are known in an ethical dispute, reasoned disagreement may still persist. Secondly moral values resemble feelings and attitudes and for this reason, they have an essentially relational aspect.

Reflection on our moral experience clearly shows us that moral values radically differ from facts and that therefore reasoning in ethics is of a different kind than reasoning about scientific or empirically factual issues. Thirdly, we have discovered that reasoning in ethics is really a matter of providing moral reasons worthy of approval in various situations. For this reason, even though we do not reject the insights of the objectivists, subjectivists or Emotivists, we describe moral concepts as gerundival concepts.

Given that reason has a role to play in determining ethical issues as such, we now ask: what sort of reason constitutes moral reason. We want to know the

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sorts of reasons that would be acceptable as sound moral reasons for acting one way or the other or for desisting from action. Let us consider a few conversations as examples: i) A student describes to a group of friends how he has perfected a system of hostage taking in the Niger Delta. Some of his friends are shocked. A says: “ But you should not be a terrorist. You should know that terrorism is against the Nigerian law.

If everyone did what you are doing the whole system would grind to a halt”. ‘ But everyone doesn’t do it,’ says B. ‘ It serves to promote the interest of the oil producing communities who have been severally cheated by the Nigerian nation. And it does benefit him considerably. There is no danger of he getting caught. He will have more money to buy books, so that he can study more easily’. And C says ‘ If he’s got the brains to work out how to turn the system to his own advantage, why shouldn’t he use them? If he were in business, he’s to be praised for doing jut that’. i) Meanwhile, a more worried-looking group of students are discussing whether the healthy, single girl sitting quietly at the head of their table should or should not have an abortion. D says he thinks she should. “ She doesn’t want the baby. It would mean years of strain, hard grind and social stigma. And for what? The world doesn’t need another person. And if the child is dull, it will have a dead-end job, and if it’s bright, it’ll join the thousands of other unemployed graduates. The fewer the people there are in the world the better for each person living in it.

To have the baby would only add to the girl’s misery”. E. says “ Even if you knew for certain that the child’s future was going to be appalling, that in

itself does not resolve the issue. We must take into account not only the consequences for the individual, but also the consequences for the general; social well-being of the society. F. adds 'Of course the appalling future of the girl and child are not the only issues. Surely there is a sacred, moral duty to do the right thing at all times', irrespective of the consequences. " Surely there is a God there. And has He not declared 'Thou shalt not kill?

It is unnatural to interfere with God's design for nature. E. The girl who is pregnant says 'Is it unnatural to control disease to amputate a leg to save the body?. And everyone looks uncomfortable. None of them seem to have got to the root of the matter. Even though many opinions on moral issues may be heard in daily life, they also represent the considered and matured opinions of philosophers over the ages. We select here for discussion some samples with the view to working toward an adequate theory of the sorts of reason or standards for human behaviour in the age of techno-scientific revolution.) The morality of human actions depends on the law allowing or forbidding certain ways of behaving (Moral Positivism). b) The morality of human actions depends on the desirable and undesirable consequences in increasing pleasure or diminishing pain for the individual (Ethical Hedonism). c) The morality of human actions depends on the desirable and undesirable consequences in promoting general social well being and diminishing social hardship. (Social Utilitarianism). d) The morality of human actions depends on the obligation one experiences in acting for the sake of duty alone. The Categorical Imperative). e) The morality of human action is determined by the full, integral development of the totality of the human person (African moral humanism). Moral Positivism The Theory of Moral Positivism is

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probably the one most widely held among philosophical laymen. It is so called because it holds that all morality rests on positive law, either enacted or customary. This theory claims that all morality is determined by commands, rules, laws, conventions, customs; that morality is the result of someone's will commanding or forbidding certain kinds of acts.

Morality, therefore, is not based on something intrinsic in the act itself or in the nature of man, but in the imposition of a will, something quite distinct and extrinsic to the human act in question. This theory rest on the premise that all principles or norms which command human obedience result from the sovereign authority who in the words of Jean-Paul Sartre (1970: 21-22) creates his own nature (essence) devoid of absolute transcendent values. The argued point here is that, man is the unique source of values and there can be no transcendent law(s) or norms anywhere, meant to guide his conduct.

The plausibility of Moral Positivism is explained by the following facts: i) that there is much contradiction and doubt about moral values themselves. And the law introduces uniformity, objectivity and simplicity, and that, ii) people are normally more of moral obligation as a result of law. It is easy, then, to conclude that moral obligation is nothing more than law. Hence, it is an accepted fact of experience that commands and threats are very powerful ways of engendering a consciousness of obligation and compliance.

If we accept the fact that standards of morality can and, indeed, must be critically established, then the theory of Moral Positivism is inadequate as a standard determining the sorts of reasons that would qualify as moral

reasons in resolving ethical issues. Common rules and laws require an imponent, who gives the commands, imposes the rules, lays down the laws. This confronts us with a dilemma; either we know the imponent or we do not. If he is known, as our earthly rulers and legislators are, then, though there will be no difficulty in discovering what his commands or laws are, his words, like ours, may be fallible.

How could you possibly tell, on this view, whether his word was correct or incorrect? If morality is the word of ordinary legislators, then we can never know what is right and what is wrong, but only what they commanded us to do in particular situations and circumstance. Their commands (laws) are nothing but mere expressions of their feelings, which attempt to evoke the sentiments of the person expressing them. It is neither the law nor the command itself that creates a distinct moral obligation but the good or evil to be achieved or avoided by virtue of the command or law.

If the command or law creates an obligation, it is because of its role and necessity in achieving the desired aims. Consequently, it in itself receives its moral sanction from the same more fundamental source. The aim of rules, laws, and customs is to achieve the social goal. Nobody denies that this is a worthy aim. But, is the social aim the sole moral aim? Is it true to say that all morality ceases in the absence of laws in relation to social goals? Is there no such thing as a moral obligation that is independent of law and rescinds from social goals?

It must be said in response to these questions that it is wrong thinking to extricate law from ethics. While it is agreed that ethics is wider in scope than

law, law itself is not only a subject matter of ethics, ethics is the judge of law, for morality takes precedence over law and is itself the standard for law.

Joseph Omoregbe (2003: 6) lends his voice here thus: Law is at the service of morality and dare not contradict morality without ipso facto ceasing to be law and losing its right to be obeyed. In order therefore for any law to be authentic and deserve to be obeyed, it must conform to morality and never contradict it.

This position serves to argue that, posited laws cannot serve as substitutes to morality or moral law; a self-imposed law, a universal law. While posited law differs from one society to another, the fundamental moral principles are the same all over the world, and while a morally sound society makes law redundant, a society of low moral standard has greater need for law and its authoritative reinforcement hence, the reasoned observation of Omoregbe that, “ people of high moral standard have no need for law, nor is law a problem to them since they observe from personal conviction what the law demands” (Ibid: 7).

It must be admitted, however, that such concepts as convention, custom, rule, social pressure ??? all of which are species of law and command ??? are quite complex. In a more elaborate discussion of the theory of Moral Positivism, they would have to be subjected to more detailed analyses bringing out their differences from each other and how they relate to moral situations. But even then, any refinement of the theory of Moral Positivism would be faced with the same radical question: How can any human authority of itself provide an adequate basis for resolving moral issues?

While one recognizes the strengths of the theory of Moral Positivism, particularly its role in showing how law may be effective in attaining desirable social goals, nevertheless the fact is that external criteria or standards do not provide us with the sorts of reason that would institute an adequate basis for determining moral issues. In same way, the relevant reasons must arise from the act itself. And to theories suggesting this approach we now direct our attention. Ethical Hedonism By rejecting the theory of moral positivism we have implied that morality is in some way inherent to the human act itself.

Some philosophers look to the consequences of human actions as a standard or principle by which to judge human actions. They ask whether the act produces desirable consequences. If so, they call it a good act. If it produces undesirable consequences, it is said to be a bad act. One form, which this way of thinking may take, is to judge the goodness of an act by its pleasant or unpleasant consequences, either for oneself or for others. The concept of pleasure itself cannot really be defined. It is a fundamental, irreducible datum of human experience.

It can only be described in broad outline. But if we cannot define it, we can certainly experience it and, therefore, know it. Modern hedonists prefer to use the word happiness to pleasure. The concepts of happiness and pleasure are serviceable in distinguishing these theories, which identify happiness with sense of pleasure (Aristippus, Bentham, Hobbes) and those theories, which declare that happiness must take into account the contentment of the

whole man which includes the satisfactions of the spirit (Aristotle, Aquinas, Mill, Sidjwick etc.).

The greatest protagonist of ethical hedonism in modern times was Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), jurist, economist, political theorist and a philosopher of some sort. According to Bentham, pain and pleasure are the two sovereign masters governing mankind. Whether it is the psychological hedonism of Jeremy Bentham or ethical hedonism of John Stuart Mill, man is said to be a being who is by nature a pleasure seeking animal; that all human actions are directed towards the search for pleasure (material or spiritual/mental). No man, the theory holds, would do anything if he were to know that no pleasure could eventually be derived from it either immediately or remotely, directly or indirectly. The point of the theory may be summed up thus, that firstly, all human action is activated by pleasure and pain alone (psychological Hedonism) and that moral actions whether good or evil, are not determined in themselves, but by their consequences for pleasure and pain respectively. Secondly, all those acts that increase pleasure and diminish pain are morally good, while those which increase pain and diminish pleasure are morally evil (ethical Hedonism).

Stumpf here recasts Bentham's presentation thus: Nature has placed mankind under the government of two sovereign masters: pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong. On the other hand, the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we think: every effort we can make to

throw off our subjection will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. In other words, a man may pretend to abjure their empire but in reality he will remain subject to it all the while. Stumpf, 1993: 77). No one should dream, Bentham informs us, that any man will lift his little finger to serve another unless it is for his own advantage. It is true that there are many situations in which serving another is a way of gaining one's own advantage; but it is always the later reason, which moves the agent. And this self-preference always holds, even should the gain for self be detrimental to any or all others. This is the way man always was and always will be constituted, and our moral theory, he thinks, must be based on this fact.

Ethics is nothing else than the art of directing the actions of men so as to bring about the greatest possible happiness on the part of those whose interest is at stake. Happiness, that is to say, pleasure and the avoidance of pain, is the only right and universally desirable end of human action. It follows that the morality of an act, its goodness or wickedness, is to be judged by its consequences. An act is good or evil depending on its usefulness for producing pleasure or pain. Pleasurable consequences are good, while painful consequences are evil. Only pleasure is good in itself and only pain is bad in itself.

It is true that a pleasure, which is good in itself, may be bad if it entails pain in its consequence; and a pain, which is bad in itself, may be good if it entails pleasure in its consequences. But no action is in itself good or evil. An action in which the pleasant consequences overbalance the painful consequences is a good act, and the more so the better the act. If, on the other had, the

painful consequences overbalance the pleasant ones, then the act is evil. Just as the act is neither good nor evil in itself, neither is the intention nor the action.

If we closely examine the theory of hedonism, we discover that it is not true to say that all human actions is activated by pleasure and pain alone. Indeed, if in fact this were the case there would be no pleasurable theory of ethical hedonism because that human being would in any case always do what is most pleasurable and avoid the painful without the moral injunction. The fact is that every human action is a complex of various elements. Besides pleasure, such act has other qualities as well. This creates a desire to appropriate them. And in their appropriation, we attain pleasure.

Rather it is because we desire them that they give us pleasure. It suffices to argue then that, the ethical hedonist confuses the ends of human activity with the principles directing human activity. For example, the pleasure seeker is not the person who seeks pleasure in all he or she does, but rather the person who will only do the things that increase pleasure or diminish pain. This is what Aristotle describes as “ an accompaniment of an activity” which may be either good or bad (Omeregbe, 2006: 83). If the pleasure seeker sought pleasure alone in all he did he would be attempting something that is psychologically impossible.

For it is a fact of psychology that in order for a man to act he must first be attracted by something in the object that catches his attention and induces desire. If he sees it as something good for him, he elicits a wish for it.

Pleasure enters as a concomitant of a will attaining possession or fulfilment

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in pursuit of a desired good. Thus, there are really two confusions to be avoided: a) We must distinguish the experience of pleasure itself from a pleasant experience. There is no such thing as an experience of pleasure alone, there can only be a sense of enjoyment in the attainment of pursued goals or the fulfilment of desired ends.) While a man may live by medicine and not for it so too, a man lives by pleasure but not for it. To try to do so is to confuse ends and principles. An end is that for the sake of which we act in a particular way. It implies either success or failure in its attainment. If we are successful in the pursuit of our end or goal we assume some further ends or, in the case of failure, for example, we may change our tracks. A principle is a rule in accordance with which we act. We may adhere to it or we may deflect from it. But whether we do or not, the principle remains the same.

If we decide that we want pleasure and nothing but pleasure then we decide to act in accordance with these principles that ensure pleasurable experiences. And our criticism is that a life lived solely in accordance with principles of pleasure is unworthy of man and leads to many decisions that in fact we would not accept on moral grounds. The arguments above illustrate for us the particular malice of the pleasure seeker. It is not so much that he seeks pleasure in all his activities rather it is that he will only assume those moral obligations and demands in which he is guided by the pleasure principle.

In one of his more daring remarks Bentham declared: If I have a crown in my pocket and not being a thirst, hesitate whether I shall buy a bottle of claret with it for my own drinking or lay it out in providing sustenance for a family I

see about to perish for want of any assistance so much the worse for me at the long run: but it is plain that, so long as I continued hesitating, the two pleasures of sensuality in the one case, of sympathy in the other, were exactly worth to me five shillings, to me they were exactly equal. (Bentham, 1948: 118)

This point of view so shocked John Staurt Mill that he wrote: It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied, than a fool satisfied. And if the fool or the pigs are of different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the questions. The other party to the comparison knows both sides'. (Mill, 2003: 82) From a moral point of view this is perhaps the most devastating argument against ethical hedonism of the egoistic kind. As we have already maintained, pleasure cannot be a sole experience for and in itself.

Pleasure does indicate achievement, satisfaction, fulfilment though, all such satisfactions are part and parcel of other goals. This means that just as there is a certain hierarchy of activities and goals in human action, so too there is a hierarchy of pleasures as their normal accompaniment or quality. But just as the hierarchy of goals is determined by the total good of the subject, their sources, so too pleasures are likewise evaluated. This position is categorically suggested by Joseph Omoregbe. He says:

It is true, of course, that we sometimes (in fact often) seek pleasure, but it is not true that the search for pleasure underlies all our actions. People make sacrifices; undergo pain and inconveniences in order to help other people without any intention or prospects of eventually deriving pleasure from such

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actions. Man is not selfish, self-seeking or pleasure seeking, as psychological egoism and hedonism would have us believe. (Omoregbe, 2003: 8) Suffice it to say, therefore, that it is wrong thinking to argue that pleasure is the only thing desirable for its own sake.

To insist that all those acts that increase pleasure and diminish pain are the only morally good acts while those which increase pain and diminish pleasure are all morally evil is, to say the least an overstatement. It is a fact of life that, not all pleasures are good and that not all pains are evil. There are pleasurable pains as much as painful pleasures. Any pleasure that is derived from a bad activity is painful (bad) pleasure, and any pleasure that is derived from a good activity is pleasurable (good) pain or pleasure. Moreso, the hedonist confuses pleasure with happiness which are in fact not the same thing.

It may be argued in conclusion here that, ethical hedonism does not cater for the sense of merit we experience in our decisions on moral matters. We have a decided conviction that there are bad pleasures and that there are good pains. We think that the pleasure taken either by the agent or spectator in, for instance, a lustful or cruel action, is bad; and we think it a good thing that people should be pained rather than pleased by contemplating vice or misery'. The refutation of ethical hedonism is in no way suggesting a puritanical attitude to life as if pleasure was something evil and, therefore, should be eliminated from life.

Nor does it suggest the stoical view that since virtue is the sole worthy goal of human striving, pleasures should be kept to a minimum. What it does

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mean is that, as human beings are very complex individuals with various needs of different kinds, there is a demand for order in satisfying the needs and controlling such satisfactions. Human beings have, within themselves the principle of such order in so far as it is recognized that reason plays a role in determining both satisfaction and control.

This principle tells us that even though pleasure plays an essential role in life, it is not a reliable guide. If there is a hierarchy of pleasures attached to a hierarchy of goals, we must search further for an adequate basis of human activity. Utilitarianism If ethical hedonism is to be rejected because pleasure is not the sole goal of human strains, or because selfishness offends our moral consciousness, then, perhaps we may argue that human well being in general should be the standard of morality. For sure we do not restrict morality either to pleasure or selfishness.

Thus one may propose the view that the sole and ultimate standard of right, wrong and obligation is the principle of utility or beneficence, which says quite strictly that the moral end that is sought in all that we do is the greatest possible balance of good over evil (or the least possible balance of evil over good). This implies that whatever the good and the bad are, they are capable of being measured and balanced against each other in some way. This is the general theory of utilitarianism. (Read Omoregbe, 2003: 233-338, Ozumba, 2001: 117-120). The theory attempts to avoid the deficiencies of other theories.

On the one hand, it tries to overcome the inadequacies of ethical hedonism and, on the other, it reacts against these theories, which say ' we simply

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know what is good and what is evil' (intuitionists). According to the Utilitarian view, we only know what is good and what is evil by evaluating the consequences of our actions in measuring the balance of good over evil, or well-being over unhappiness. It holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness pain and privation of pleasure.

We must distinguish two kinds of Utilitarianism: Act-Utilitarianism and Rule Utilitarianism. (i) Act-Utilitarianism holds that in general or at least it is practicable for one to tell what is right or obligatory by appealing directly to the principle or, in other words, by trying to see which of the actions of his will, or is likely to produce the greatest balance of good over evil in the universe. One must ask What effect will my doing of this in this situation have on the general balance of good over evil? Not “ what effect will everyone’s doing this kind of act in this kind of situation have on the general balance of good over evil? Rule Utilitarianism). Generalizations like ‘ Telling the truth is probably always for the greatest general good may be useful as guides based on past experience but the crucial question is always whether telling the truth in this case is for the greatest general good or not. This version of utilitarianism holds that the rightness or wrongness of an action should be decided only on the basis of the consequences of the action. In the words of Omoregbe “ those actions that produce good results ??? the greatest good of the greatest number ??? are good; while those that produce evil results ??? Pain or Unhappiness ??? are evil” (Omoregbe, 2003: 237).

Act Utilitarianism does not take into account the nature of an action itself; what count is the result or the consequences of the action. We should, therefore, always perform those actions that will produce the best possible results for the greatest number of people. It can never be right to act on the rule of telling the truth if we have good independent grounds for thinking it would be for the greatest general good not to tell the truth in a particular case, any more than it can be correct to say all cows are black in the presence of one that is not. ii) Rule ??? Utilitarianism is a rather different view, which has also been attributed, like Act-Utilitarianisms, to Mill. As the name suggests, it emphasizes centrality of rules in morality and insists that we are generally, if not always, to tell what to do in particular situations by appeals to a rule like that of truth-telling rather than by asking what particular action will have the best consequences in the situation in question. Such rules will themselves be determined by their role in promoting the greatest general good for everyone.

That is, the question is not which action has the greatest utility, but which rule has. We should ask, then, when we are proposing to do something not ' what will happen if I do that in such a case? ' but ' what would happen if everyone were to do that in such cases? ' The issue in point here is the useful consequences that result from everybody adopting and obeying this rule. Only those rules should be adopted which if observed by everybody, would produce the best possible results for the greatest number of people.

It means here that a rule that brings to birth a " less utility content is to be replaced with another one that has capacity for greatest good to the

greatest number” (Ozumba, 2001: 118). The principle of utility comes in normally at least, not in determining what particular actions to perform (this is normally determined by rules), but in determining what the rules should be. Rules must be selected and maintained, revised, and replaced on the basis of their utility and not on any other basis.

The principle of utility is still the ultimate standard, but it is to be appealed to at the level of rules rather than at the level of particular judgements. The act-utilitarian may allow rules to be used; but if he does, he must conceive of a rule like ‘telling the truth’ as follows: ‘Telling the truth is generally for the greatest general good’. By contrast the rule-utilitarian must conceive of it thus: “our always telling the truth is for the greatest general good”. Or ‘it is for the greatest good if we always tell the truth’.

This means that for the rule-utilitarian it may be right to obey a rule like telling the truth simply because it is so useful to have the rule, even when, in the particular case in question, telling the truth does not lead to the best consequences. Since Utilitarianism has two forms each of them must be examined. Regarding both forms, it is quite obvious that they are an improvement on ethical hedonism. For Utilitarianism is not restricted to pleasure alone, but takes into account the whole range of human behaviour and well-being.

Utilitarianism is not restricted either to the individual or a particular group but extends itself to the whole range of human beings. Nevertheless

Utilitarianism in each of the forms has deficiencies. If it can be shown that Act Utilitarianism in fact precludes the fulfillment it intends then it must be

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rejected. It, thus, seems that strict adherence to this theory does not lead to universal beneficence. It can be shown that following such a theory renders universal beneficence impossible to achieve. Therefore, such a theory is inadequate.

This fact ??? the impossibility of achieving universal beneficence ??? can be illustrated by comparing what happens in the army in which everybody is intent on victory in every act and applying the findings to our own case. If every soldier is inspired by the single aim of victory, the end will not be achieved by telling each man so to act, as in his judgement best achieves victory. And these are some of the reasons: a) No soldier can effectively act if he acts entirely on his own. b) No soldier can tell his part in the operation if he does not know what others are doing. c) Any common action would be a mere welter of conflicting, uncoordinated, self-selecting, confusion. d) Commands lose their force because soldiers will interpret that their own way and, the commander knowing this will be more reluctant to issue them except where they make little difference. If victory is to be possible, there must be law and order; there must be people who make decisions and people who carry them out precisely because they came from a higher authority. In fact, a soldier may not even see the connection between what he is commanded to do and the victory to be achieved.

Yet, it is the condition of victory that different people do different things in a fixed order so that the collaboration of all brings victory. Applying the analogy of the army and regulations to Act Utilitarianism, it appears that, if the end of each and every act is to be effectively pursued, it is actually

necessary in such a case that promotion of this end should not be each man's sole criterion of practical decision; on the contrary, each man must be prepared to do, must think it wrong not to do some acts which, in his judgement and perhaps also in fact, are not such as to promote the general good.

From the example of the soldiers' directly intending victory and thereby rendering it impossible, we can draw a general conclusion: If in each act we directly intend the fundamental aim of such acts, then, we render impossible the achievement of that aim. To state this by way of example: If a profiteer directly intends profit in each act of enterprise, if each member of a team directly intends scoring goals in each move, that scoring will be very much reduced; if in an election, every member of the supporters directly intends the maximum of votes, then in each of these cases-profit, goals, votes- the desired end will not be achieved.

And this flows from the logic of the relationships between fundamental options, desires, aims and the direct intention of each activity in relation to them. Act Utilitarianism runs into particular difficulties in professional ethics. If I am an Utilitarian Doctor, and I entrust the care of my health to a simple Utilitarian Doctor, I assume that he is beneficent to me in a general sense. But I cannot presume that he is uniquely beneficent toward me unless such an attitude does not become an obstacle to his sympathy for the good of all.

As a simple Utilitarian, I cannot criticize his reservations; I must accept the implications of his position. I could not get him to promise, in the manner of the Hippocratic oath, always and only to deploy to my advantage his skills. I

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could not really and usefully, ask him to disclose his intentions regarding me, his patient. The reason for the reservations and non-disclosure of intentions is, in each case, the same and interesting; as long as universal beneficence is directly the unique standard of each of my activities, there is no other principle which may stand as clearly justified and therefore, in practice, to be accepted.

Consequently, basic principles like keeping promises, telling the truth, revealing intentions can never be ascertained and, therefore, acting on their acceptance becomes unnecessarily risky, in fact, impossible. You can only make promises where there is a certain expectation that promises will be kept. You can only tell the truth where language is acceptable as an instrument of communication. You can only reveal intentions where there is a common ground of understanding among people. But where each of these expectations is vitiated by a condition, such institutions and practices are ruled out of court.

If general beneficence were the only criterion, then promising and talking