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# Conscience and Community: Exploring the Relationship between Conscience formation and Systemic Corruption (in Nigeria)

Augustine E. Ebido

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CONSCIENCE AND COMMUNITY: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
CONSCIENCE FORMATION AND SYSTEMIC FORMATION (IN NIGERIA)

A Dissertation

Submitted to McAnulty School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Augustine E. Ebido, O.P.

May 2014

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Augustine E. Ebido, O.P.

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Approved March 19, 2014

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## ABSTRACT

### CONSCIENCE AND COMMUNITY: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONSCIENCE FORMATION AND SYSTEMIC FORMATION (IN NIGERIA)

By

Augustine E. Ebido, O.P.

May 2014

Dissertation supervised by Gerald Boodoo, PhD

This research focuses on the impact of the moral community (or social context) on the formation of conscience and its implication for moral responsibility. It is an interdisciplinary approach to theological reflection that is particularly attentive to psychological, philosophical, sociological, and neurobiological viewpoints showing how these have either distorted or broadened our understanding of conscience in its relation to community and social responsibility, or its formation in relationship to our moral development. It stresses reciprocity of conduct (for we are “responders”) and the complementarities of *internal* and *external* sanctions. It insists that the influence of conscience on behavior is undermined by a fixation on its *cognitive* at the detriment of the *feeling* aspect such that retrieving the latter will broaden our appreciation of its deep but subtle influence. While admitting the

richness of African “communalism” as the basis for a healthy formative process, it also sees in it a perplexing paradox given the socio-political realities of venal leadership and systemic corruption that de-colors the African landscape. Focusing on Nigeria, it identifies “tribalism” as a socio-moral “pathology” (an institutionalized self-interest) that not only distorts the traditional process of moral formation but has evolved as a core driver of systemic corruption. It claims that globalization enables “external powers” to impact local moral orientation. It links “local tribalism” and “international tribalism” as “pathologies” based on kinship of disordered self-interest. It exposes how the latter influences local moral disorientation in a way analogous to how the local moral community impacts the *malformation* of individual conscience and thus influencing irresponsibility. Its recommendations include: a “glocalized” moral reform aimed at “updating” conscience formation process and overcoming *tribalism*; a paradigm shift in foreign policy agenda towards a new ethic; and a “three-stage-process” that focuses on deconstructing unhealthy belief systems and building “active” moral communities as part of a robust long-term strategy against systemic corruption and deeper socio-moral transformation.

## DEDICATION

Edmund and Catherine Ebido; John and Margaret Ingold

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The original impetus for this research came from a hunger that seeks to understand the deeper reasons underlying poor governance and systemic corruption that has plagued Nigeria (and most African nations) since independence. The degree of corruption found in our leadership reached insane proportions in Nigeria in both military and civilian regimes such that the question is asked, “Where is their conscience?” Coincidentally, this research commenced at a time when the world was enveloped in economic recession that threatened the future of many countries and families. The underlying reason for this recession was monumental “greed” of certain individuals who were supposedly “custodians” of our financial institutions. Some of the bank executives that gambled away the future of so many people around the world, not only made money out of the crash itself but walked away with salaries and bonuses that were simply ludicrous.<sup>1</sup> The question is again asked “where is their conscience?” Evidently, greed is not a uniquely African problem but a global phenomenon. However, given the reality that corruption has arrested the possibility of building sustainable social institutions (particularly in Nigeria), this research attempts to seek an understanding of the deeper roots of the problem of moral irresponsibility.

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<sup>1</sup> See Sam Polk’s New York Times article “The Love of Money”. He was a young executive who traded on derivatives during the recession. His confession gives insight to the culture of greed on Wall Street. He made \$3.6 million dollars in bonuses and was angry it was not enough! He said, “Not only was I not helping fix any problems in the world, but I was profiting from them. During the market crash in 2008, I’d made tons of money by shorting the derivatives of risky companies. As the world crumbled, I profited. I’d seen the crash coming, but instead of trying to help the people it would hurt most – people who didn’t have a million dollars in the bank – I made money off it.” See (Goleman, Emotional Intelligence: 10th Anniversary Edition 2012)[http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/19/opinion/sunday/for-the-love-of-money.html?ref=executivepay&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/19/opinion/sunday/for-the-love-of-money.html?ref=executivepay&_r=0) Alan Pyke, in an article, “Three infuriating facts about Wall Street CEOs five years after the Crises,” details the payout and bonuses of the CEOs that were responsible for the meltdown. See <http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2013/09/10/2595421/infuriating-facts-subprime-ceos-years-financial-crisis/> Alvin Lin, traces the “causes” of the recession in his paper, [http://www.academia.edu/1615702/The\\_Global\\_Financial\\_Crisis\\_Causes\\_Remedies\\_and\\_Discourses](http://www.academia.edu/1615702/The_Global_Financial_Crisis_Causes_Remedies_and_Discourses)

The question of conscience is very poignant because it is commonly assumed to be the doorkeeper of moral rectitude.<sup>2</sup> Catholic moral tradition has consistently held that conscience is the gateway to moral responsibility, “man’s most secret core,” where he hears God’s voice “echoing in his depths” and calling him to act uprightly.<sup>3</sup> It is that capacity that enables us to “recognize the moral quality” of specific acts (either performed in the past, present, or future),<sup>4</sup> and to enable us to make prudent judgment with respect to that quality. Therefore, if our leaders consistently make wrong choices, does this imply they do not have a conscience or that they have but theirs do not influence their actions? The answer has obvious implication for universal application.

To the first part of the question, some have argued that those who act without the normal “pangs of conscience” have psychological problems verging on the psychopathic.<sup>5</sup> If greedy cooperate CEOs (in the U.S) and venal political leaders (in Nigeria) are proven to have “lost” their consciences, then it does seem the problem lays not on the *functionality* of conscience *per se* but on a deeper psychological malady that impact upon their *access* to their specific consciences. The second part of the question (as to the influence of conscience on human

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<sup>2</sup> *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Unabridged, s.v. “conscience,” defines it as “the inner sense of what is right or wrong in one’s conduct or motives, impelling one towards right action.” *The New Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) says that “Moral Conscience, present at the heart of the person, enjoins him at the appropriate moment to do good and to avoid evil. It also judges particular choices, approving those that are good and denouncing those that are evil” (See, CCC, 1777)

<sup>3</sup> Vatican II Documents (*Gaudium et Spes*, 16). John H. Newman calls it the “messenger,” and “the aboriginal Vicar of Christ.” See, “Letter to the Duke of Norfolk,” V, cited in CCC, 1778.

<sup>4</sup> CCC, 1778

<sup>5</sup> See R. D. Hare, *Without Conscience: The disturbing world of the psychopaths among us*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), pp.3-7 He argues that psychopaths are essentially distinguished by their “stunning lack of conscience.” Hare, *Without Conscience*, p. 6

behavior) is more problematic. There are scholarly views that suggest *conscience does or does not* have real influence on our actions.<sup>6</sup>

It is this particular question of the ability of conscience to influence our behavior (a question of its *relevance*) that prompts the need to explore the deeper roots of moral responsibility. If conscience is not relevant to our behavior, then what is it in our natural endowments that enable us to act responsibly? On the other hand, if conscience is that “natural endowment” that enables responsible action in us, then why does it seem to be impotent in some people? Are there “conditions” that enable its functionality in influencing us to act rightly?

Addressing the above questions more holistically is the purpose for this research. We agree with the traditional Catholic view that conscience is the capacity in us for moral responsibility. It is “an inner inclination”<sup>7</sup> to do the good thing and avoid evil. But given that the possible “relevance” of conscience has been in decline since the last century due to negative scholarly opinions<sup>8</sup>, we intend to begin our quest by re-examining the question of the human moral dilemma as the objective of *chapter one*. This broadens our perspective to forge a link

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<sup>6</sup> David Hume argued that reason is “impotent” for as he says, “Reason is wholly inactive, and can never be the source of so active a principle as conscience, or a sense of morals”.<sup>6</sup> The stress is ours. See *Treatise on Human Nature*, London: John Noon, 1739, reprinted in *Morality and the Good Life: An Introduction to Ethics Through Classical Sources*, edited by Robert C. Solomon and Cancy C. Martin (New York: McGraw-Hill Company, 2004, p. 206-220. See also Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl M. Oliner, *Toward a Caring Society: Ideas into Action* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), p.77; <http://www.questia.com/read/16166263>.

<sup>7</sup> Philip Selznick, *The Moral Commonwealth: Social Theory and the Promise of Community* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1992), p. 152

<sup>8</sup> Sigmund Freud is representative of scholars that projected a negative view of conscience. His conclusions claim that conscience is merely the neurotic expression of internalized “social angst” or the repressed fear of parental and societies’ rules. Enlightenment philosopher, David Hume, argues that “reason is a slave to the passions,” implying that if conscience is an intellectual activity, as traditional Catholic theology holds it to be, it has little influence on behavior. Thomas Hobbes’ classic argument that selfishness is a necessity of our nature implies that conscience has little influence on our choices if it has to do with self-interest. The specific references to these scholars are provided in the body of this research.



between our broader moral complexity and the specific solutions designed to be found in an *active* conscience.<sup>9</sup> An “active” conscience in this study refers to a *well-formed* and *informed* conscience. Traditionally, Catholic tradition holds that the more a “correct” or *informed* conscience prevails, “the more do persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and try to be guided by objective moral standards of moral conduct.”<sup>10</sup> Therefore *chapter two* will explore the psychological theories of moral development as a prelude to theological views on conscience. These are complemented by philosophical and neurobiological viewpoints on the theme. This approach provides us a broader perspective on views that have tended to diminish the value of conscience or provide useful insights that would help us understand the significance of socialization or primary socio-moral context for the *quality* of conscience and moral formation.

In our search for a deeper understanding of the influence of conscience on behavior we will try to retrieve its “feeling” aspect as a critical component that is often denied and the addition of which would significantly boost its influence. Philosophical and neurobiological insights indicate that we are *often* moved by our appetites. The deeper reasons for our acting are often based on *how we feel* than merely *what we think*. It is our feelings that imbue our action with meaning such that we put our “heart” in it.<sup>11</sup> This reality of our nature does not imply impunity but that the *cognitive* and *feeling* component of conscience work as a composite

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<sup>9</sup> Traditionally, Catholic Moral theology has affirmed that conscience could lead one to an error of judgment unless it is properly formed and informed (See CCC nos. 17790-1794). We stress “active” conscience to refer to a well-formed and informed conscience. Selznick considers the formation of conscience as the “natural process” that that opens us up or disposes us properly to “moral concerns”. P. Selznick, *The Moral Commonwealth*, p. 151

<sup>10</sup> See *Gaudium et Spes*, 16

<sup>11</sup> See Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition* (Kindle edition: Random House, 2012), pp. 4-5. Goleman argues that it is misplaced to call human “homo-sapiens” because science has shown that our decisions are often based not merely on cognition but on emotion and often more of the later. Goleman, p. 5

process. We experience “wholehearted commitment” when our feelings are involved. And conscience is about *wholeheartedness*, about *feeling right* about what we did, doing or to do.<sup>12</sup>

The specific moral challenges we are confronted with particularly in Nigeria is the socio-moral condition that gives birth to venal leadership and systemic corruption. Therefore ascertaining the deeper roots of this socio-moral disease that has rendered comatose all efforts at building effective social institutions will involve examining relevant aspects of traditional structures of moral formation and the impact of social conditions on these structures. This will not only help us understand the normal *processes* that shape moral thinking in the local setting, but also help us determine the possibility that “consciences” could be functionally *active* within these prevailing conditions.<sup>13</sup> The objective of *chapter three* will be to examine the notion of community and its relevant social context to underscore its significance for moral formation. We shall argue that an ideal conscience can only be formed in an ideal community – not an abstract utopian ideal, but a community that has an *active* moral voice.<sup>14</sup> This provides the background for assessing the impact of specific socio-cultural practices in Nigeria on conscience formation and overall moral evolution.

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<sup>12</sup> See, Sidney Callahan, *In Good Conscience: Reason and Emotion in Moral Decision Making* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), p. 95

<sup>13</sup> William C. Spohn argues that “Conscience depends on the moral quality of the group to which we belong. We gain our moral bearing from the communities we are born into and deliberately choose, beginning with family and extending to peers, other adults, religious and professional communities. We carry their voices in our heads, for better or for worse. Recent research indicates that people identify with those values and principles that are supported by communities that matter to them. O’Connell writes in his recent work on moral formation that we live up or down to the standards of the groups to which we belong.” See W. C. Spohn, “Conscience and Moral Development,” in *Conscience*, edited by Charles E. Curran (New York, Paulist Press, 2004), p.133

<sup>14</sup> Amitai Etzioni argues that “community is a moral voice” and where this is lacking, there is likely not going to be an authentic community. See, *The Spirit of the Community: The Reinvention of American Society* (New York: Touchstone Book, 1994), pp. 32-38

We identify “tribalism” as a primary “socio-moral pathology” that its impact on traditional moral formation process in Nigeria has been ignored for too long.<sup>15</sup> Tribalism is described here as the “institutionalization of self-interest” that over time evolves a *legacy of distrust* as the default form of inter-tribal relation that then skews the socialization process in a direction detrimental to optimal formation of conscience and morality.<sup>16</sup> In other words, we are contending that tribalism is a key element that disrupts traditional moral formation process in Nigeria.<sup>17</sup> We also apply the insights of global analysis in this chapter to show the link between “local tribalism” and “international tribalism” as one of “kinship,” since both are forms of “institutionalized self-interests.” We will argue that *international tribalism* impacts moral orientation in the local community in a way analogous to how the moral community impacts

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<sup>15</sup> There is a perplexing ambivalence in the fact that Africans in diaspora complain and fight against “racism” abroad but tend to justify or rationalize “tribalism” at home. Even more ironic is the fact that most are “good” Christians. Jay, J. Carney and others have identified tribalism with racism as they lamented on how “racist ideology” among the Hutu “institutionalized discrimination” that gave birth to the Rwandan Genocide. Most were pious Catholics. See, J. J. Carney, “Waters of Baptism, Blood of Baptism?” In *African Ecclesial Review*, Vol.2, March-June (2008): 12-13. We consider tribalism and racism as essentially sharing “kindred spirits” for both are forms of prejudice based on disparity of “kinship”. But our characterization does take due cognizance of the inherent value in ethnic solidarity prevalent among all human groups.

<sup>16</sup> J.S Mill argues that conscience is an internal sanction of duty whose “binding force” depends on whether one is “cultivated in it,” not. In other words, it has no compelling power on those whose consciences are undeveloped. He counsels for the cultivation of conscience because of its social utility, it helps to increase happiness in society when most people act responsibly in keeping with the demands of law. Internal sanctions complement external sanctions (or civil law). See J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, edited by George Sher, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. In *Morality and the Good Life* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004, pp. 315-351. See also Robert D. Hare, *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us* (Kindle Edition: Guilford Press, 1999) Location, 904

<sup>17</sup> Gordon W. Allport has provided insight in his seminal work on “prejudice” that we explored in understanding the roots of this socio-moral disease. He elaborates that prejudice is not merely “thinking ill of others without warrant,” or “a feeling, favorable or unfavorable, towards a person or thing prior to, or not based on actual experience.” He specifically defines it as “an aversive or hostile attitude towards a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to the group.” He then asserts from above that “***ethnic prejudice is an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization. It may be felt or expressed. It may be directed toward a group as a whole, or towards an individual because he is a member of that group.***” See Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition, 1979, pp.7, 9

upon individual conscience and behavior. This dialectical relation is based upon the reciprocity of conduct at the core of moral irresponsibility.

Chapter four focuses on Nigeria socio-political context for particular application of the insights we gleaned from the foregoing chapters. It explores the notion of corruption (incidental, systematic, or systemic) and identifies the Nigerian socio-political context as a society immersed in systemic corruption. We expose the nature of corruption and describe the extensions of systemic corruption in Nigeria (from despotic and venal leadership to scam artists in cyber cafes). Theories of systemic corruption we explore reveal their strengths (especially of “targeted gradualism”)<sup>18</sup> and inadequacies.<sup>19</sup> We will recommend a more holistic approach that constitutes part of a long-term strategy to the problem.

The final chapter (chapter five) synthesizes the essential points of our research. Our approach is to provide a critical summary of the previous chapters and to apply the essential insights of the research in formulating our recommendations and general conclusion. Part of our recommendation is a “glocalized”<sup>20</sup> moral reform with a stress on *internal content* of reform.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Susan Rose-Ackerman analysis provides a useful insight for the recommendations we will eventually advocate in this research. See Rose Ackerman, *Corruption in Government* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> Phyllis Dininio, “The Risk of Recorruption,” in *Fighting Corruption in Developing Countries*, edited by Bertram I. Spector (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, Inc, 2005), pp. 233-249

<sup>20</sup> Habibul H. Khondker traces the history of this term to an adaptation of Japanese word “dochakuka” that means “global local” (the effort to adapt globalized farming methods to local needs). It has since been used by different authors to describe the integral relationship between the global and local. For the historical evolution of this term, see Habibul H. Khondker, “Glocalization as Globalization: Evolution of a Sociological Concept, in *Bangladesh e-journal of Sociology*, 1(2) June, 2004. <http://www.bangladeshsociology.org/Habib%20-%20Glocalization.htm>. See also Victor Roudometof, “Transnationalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Glocalization,” in *Current Sociology*, Vol. 53 (1): 113-135, <http://csi.sagepub.com/content/53/1/113>. William Schweiker uses this term to describe “a condition in which the local is globalized and global forces are only grasped in distinctive local situations” See, “Whither Global Ethics? Moral Consciousness and Global Cultural Flows,” in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 42, no. 3 (2007), <http://www.questia.com/read/1G1-171137337>. We use this term here to describe the same idea of interpenetration of the global in the local such that powerful nations and multinationals that have significant influence in other nations (like Nigeria), where they have interests, can participate in a significant way in a reform agenda through their

We will be proposing a unique method (the “three-stage-process”) that is tailored to meet the needs of largely uneducated agrarian societies of Nigeria (and perhaps Africa) without being too simplistic to the educated class. We hope that this method be part of a robust long-term strategy for moral reform in Nigeria (and perhaps Africa) that aims at *updating* conscience formation and raising moral consciousness by building *active* moral communities, one village at a time

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policies and actions. The inherent danger of any such collaboration between the West and Africa is that of neo-colonialism. Recognizing this possible danger is important for the partners until trust is built. We cannot for fear of the possible risks in life confine ourselves to live a life of isolation.

<sup>21</sup> Part of that internal reform effort is the critical re-evaluation of received values encoded in behavior, practices, and symbols such that unhealthy aspects could be expunged and healthy practices retrieved or reinvented.

## 1.0 SEARCHING FOR FOUNDATIONS OF MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

### 1.0.1 INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER ONE

We assume that in order to understand the significance of conscience for the development of character, we need to expose some aspects of the human struggle for achieving moral responsibility. Therefore, this introductory chapter provides a critical background for understanding why we need to revisit the question of conscience and also defines our chosen methodology as a “synthetic” model<sup>22</sup>. Given that we do not intend to force the claim of the *relevance* of conscience for the growth and development of moral character and for building and maintenance of good human institutions, hence, we considered that the best way to begin is by raising questions regarding the human dilemma with moral responsibility, and to search for the roots of moral irresponsibility.

While this study does not claim that this is a wholly new quest, we are however convinced that this question needs to be raised *afresh* in the light of prevailing historical situations. We have witnessed the rate at which corruption in government and cooperate organs is impacting both developed and developing nations around the world. Africa in particular is experiencing unparalleled corruption, a monumental failure of leadership, and a disturbing passivity of its citizens to hold their leadership accountable. Evidence from experience suggests that systemic corruption is perpetuated when the greater part of the citizens deliberately or inadvertently participate in it. And systemic corruption and failed leadership often lead to social disintegration. Both realities can be effectively forestalled *if and only if* the ordinary citizens are

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<sup>22</sup> Stephen B. Bevans presented six possible “models of contextual theology” that includes: translation, anthropological, praxis, synthetic, transcendental, and countercultural models none of which is inherently superior and/or better than the other. See *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2004).

properly enlightened and empowered to fight for the kind of commonwealth they want and/or deserve.

This chapter provides a foundational framework for understanding what has gone wrong first with the human moral structures in general and specifically with the Nigerian socio-moral context such that Nigerians often seem incapable of shaping positively the trajectory of their own development. We hope to argue that indeed, something has gone wrong with the socio-moral foundations of human communities such that incidental or systemic corruption we now experience on a large scale globally is but a primary symptom of that fact. We strongly hold to the view that *unless we underline afresh the reality of human moral dilemma, understanding the role that conscience plays as the “doorkeeper” of both “good character” and “good citizenship” (and leadership) is a virtual impossibility.* Specifically relevant for Nigeria we stress that unless we begin a holistic socio-moral re-evaluation, exposing and expunging certain unhealthy cultural and socio-moral viewpoints and beliefs that confuse and dis-empower our people, and replacing them with more healthy and empowering ones, we may not likely build very strong social-political and economically vibrant and **enduring** institutions in this century despite the positive index we now see on the horizon.

This chapter has two parts. The first part raises the question of the human moral dilemma by exploring the notion of responsibility and searching for the roots of moral [ir]responsibility. We define the notion of responsibility that is specific for the goals of this research. H. R. Niebuhr and Philip Selznick provide us insights in conceptualizing responsibility that stresses reciprocity of conduct. This provides us a contrasting framework to examine some views on the African notion of moral responsibility. We singled out the concept of “Ubuntu” as a specific African concept that approximates the extensions of the meaning we ascribe to moral responsibility in

Africa even though it is a region-specific concept. Ironically, there is no homogenous Nigerian term for it. This forces one to think of a need to “invent” a homogenous term for responsibility.

An adequate understanding of moral responsibility implies moral agency. Therefore, we shall examine the notion of personhood in its Western and African conceptualizations to underline the different emphasis and accentuate its implication for understanding African moral orientation. Given that African notion of person is embedded irrevocably with its notion of community, we shall examine the nexus between personhood, moral responsibility, and community. This will situate our theme for fuller development in subsequent chapters when we develop that relationship at a deeper level in relation to conscience. The difficulties arising from our research on personhood and moral responsibility leads us to further explore the “roots” of moral responsibility. We shall examine the data from neurobiology and moral psychology to refresh our mind on the state of the debate regarding the origins of morality and the human capacities for overcoming our “genetic” predisposition to irresponsibility. We shall examine the role of nature and/or nurture (environment) in overcoming the single moral albatross called “selfishness” or in the parlance of neurobiology: our “selfish gene”.

The second part of the chapter will be on methodology. We shall define our chosen methodology (as synthetic theological model) and provide reasons for our choice. Given that this is an interdisciplinary approach to theological reflection, we consider this model as having the proper extensions to accommodate and dialogue with not just diverse theological and philosophical viewpoints that this research will encounter, but also the insights from biological and social sciences. Finally, we end this chapter by raising questions about the relevance of a methodological shift in emphasis among African scholars from a need to develop the conceptual and structural traditions we inherited to one of reconstructing and improving upon that tradition.



We consider a paradigm shift from a compact retrieval of complex traditions to one of “critical differentiation” as holding the key to African self-understanding and development in this century.

## 1.1 Human Moral Dilemma: Defining Moral Responsibility

Men who are governed by reason...desire nothing for themselves which they do not also desire for the rest of mankind, and therefore they are just, faithful, and honorable.<sup>23</sup>

The man-made tragedies of this century alone evidently mock the sentiments in the beautiful quote above. Some of such tragedies include the two world wars, the genocides (the “holocaust” being its extreme form) in Germany, Kosovo, Rwanda, Somalia, among others. It should include the “kleptocracies” that most despotic leaders practiced (or still practice as a camouflage for democracy) and effectively arrest the development of their respective countries. Having squandered the resources of their respective countries they jettisoned the development of its human potentials. We must now add the recent phenomenon of “suicide bombing” that has claimed thousands of lives as well as changed the world dynamics and the way we live. Finally, we cannot overlook the prime mortgage crisis that plunged the world into an economic meltdown with very painful and lasting consequences. A common trait that runs through these human activities is its irrationality.

It is a troubling paradox that at a possible zenith of human progress,<sup>24</sup> at least with reference to knowledge, we find an increasing irrationality. This irrationality is manifested in irresponsible actions in every tragedy of human history. While it is smug to point accusing

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<sup>23</sup> Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics* (London: Dent, 1910) reprint of 1677 edition, book 4. Prop.22 cited in P. Selznick, *Moral Commonwealth*, p. 209.

<sup>24</sup> Given the lack of consensus as to what constitutes “development” we prefer to use the term “progress” in its ordinary meaning as “an advance” (Oxford dictionary notes its Latin roots: “*progressus*” See, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/progress?q=progress> ) in almost all areas of human *knowledge* - especially as made evident in available scientific and technological data. The claim of an “advance” is still debatable because it is relative to differing views as to what constitutes “progress” or a “setback”. This debate is not one we intend to pursue here.

fingers at notorious individuals like Adolf Hitler, Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia (the ethnic cleanser in Serbia), Theoneste Bagosora (the genocide organizer of Rwanda), Osama Bin Laden (the spiritual leader of modern day terrorists), and even ponzi schemers<sup>25</sup> like Bernard L. Madoff, yet they all serve to underscore the human predicament of a defective conscience. Predictably, these irresponsible acts of human history keep repeating themselves; regrettably, the negatives seem to be more repetitive. It is the irresponsible acts of man that threaten not just human civilization but life itself on planet earth. It is imperative to self-preservation that we begin to reconsider what has gone wrong (or going wrong) with the human project.

This research is not particularly concerned about single individuals with an uncanny capacity for great evil (for we will always have them), but is rather more interested in understanding why masses of people can be duped to act against their better judgments – even if it be the influence of charismatic monsters like Hitler, Bin Laden, or falling prey to fraudsters like Madoff. We believe that it requires a certain degree of irresponsibility if not serious moral pathology to be part or a participant in the schemes these people orchestrated. Whether it be a confused wo/man participating in “ethnic cleansing,” or “suicide bombing” that destroys innocent lives, or an elite partner in a cycle of “systemic corruption” that is crippling a nation (a wall street entrepreneur or an actor in a third world government) not only expresses a puzzling “irrationality” but seem to point to the flowering of certain seeds of irresponsibility sown at given historical moments. Each of these horrendous acts has a story, a life-cycle, or a history.

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<sup>25</sup> Online Investment encyclopedia defines it as “a fraudulent investing scam that promises high rates of return at little risk to investors. The scheme generates returns for older investors by acquiring new investors. This scam actually yields the promised returns to earlier investors, as long as there are more new investors.” See more: <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/p/ponzischeme.asp#ixzz1ZyRrsJFz>. This scheme is only one among many other fraudulent activities we now classify as “scams”. These activities form either part or whole of a scammer’s work portfolio. It therefore could constitute a “normal” daily activity of a ‘normal’ person.

It is our contention that in all situations, great moral evil on a large scale as we have experienced so far never succeeds without the cooperation of a willing majority of “normal” people or a community of moral agents. It is for this reason that we begin this research with investigating afresh the roots of moral [ir]responsibility as a critical background that helps us understand its deep links with formation or “deformation” of conscience and vice versa, in a given community of agents. As Philip Selznick puts it, “to be effective conscience depends on an array of psychic competencies, especially the capacity to defer gratification, experience guilt, make commitments, and fulfill obligations.”<sup>26</sup> We conceive conscience as the *doorkeeper* of *responsible actions* such that it is inconceivable that we can act responsibly in a consistent manner without a *living* (or active) conscience. It is this intrinsic dialectics between conscience and moral responsibility that needs understanding today for a recovery of this critical quality of responsible action that not only builds character but also the quality of the human society.

H. Richard Niebuhr’s definition of responsibility helps us to effectively differentiate it from irresponsibility. He argues:

The idea or pattern of responsibility, then, may summarily and abstractly be defined as the idea of an agent’s action as response to an action upon him in accordance with his interpretation of the latter action and with his expectation of response to his response; and all of this in a continuing community of agents.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> P. Selznick, *The Moral Commonwealth*, p. 151. We shall explore in later chapters the value of “guilt” for moral ordering in any society. We shall argue that the effort to purge the human psyche of all sense of “guilt” poses a serious problem to proper development of moral consciousness.

<sup>27</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self*, p. 65.

Evidently this definition departs from the traditional “merit-based” approach (**Aristotelian model**) in defining moral responsibility.<sup>28</sup> We shall revisit this model later in this chapter. Four elements are involved in Niebuhr’s definition: a) response to previous action b) interpretation c) accountability d) social solidarity. It is primarily a “response” to an action done to us. In other words, responsibility is a fruit of experience. It is a “response” in the light of the meaning we input to a prior action underscoring the significance of interpretation. Interpretation is at the heart of responsibility because if one understands that prior action to be positive (loving, kind, helpful, and life-giving) it will influence one’s response in a radical way if contrasted with a negative interpretation (hurtful, hateful, mean, death dealing). It is therefore a “response” that is “in accordance with our interpretation of the question to which answer is given.”<sup>29</sup> Niebuhr explains that in our effort to act responsibly, we try to answer the question “what shall I do?” by posing a prior question, “what is going on?” or “what is being done to me?”<sup>30</sup> Niebuhr insists that our responsible actions are not just responses to interpreted actions but there ought to be expectation of other responses or an “anticipation of answers to our answers”<sup>31</sup> which is accountability.

Accountability therefore is being able to stay with our actions and accept the consequences of such actions. Our response is only but a unit in a chain of responses – a form of dialogue in action that forms a whole narrative. It is only proper to then have social solidarity as

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<sup>28</sup> Aristotle provides us with the oldest model of this approach to understanding moral responsibility in his discourse on virtues. See *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book II: 8:20-25; III: 1-12).

<sup>29</sup> R. H. Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self*, p.63

<sup>30</sup> This constitutes part of Niebuhr’s critique of deontological (Kant) and teleological approaches (Aquinas) to morality as they presume the moral agent basically asks questions of ultimate ends and/or ultimate laws. He proposes a “relational ethic” of doing what is “fitting” or “appropriate” than what is our “duty” or the “law”.

<sup>31</sup> Niebuhr, *Ibid*, p. 64.

its fourth element. Social solidarity confirms that there is continuity in this dialogical action – a response and reciprocal response that forges the bond of relationships holding the society together or initiates its disintegration. Social solidarity ensures that this interaction is “among beings forming a continuing society.” He argues that personal responsibility implies both a “continuity of a self” and that of “community of agents” for this dialogical action of reciprocal relation to happen.

Part of the significance of Niebuhr’s insight for us is in his rejection of the view that humans are basically “citizens” who merely “obey laws” (as we find in I. Kant) or those that see them as “builders” that seek to achieve certain ends (Aristotle). Niebuhr rather prefers to see a human being as a social organism – “living in dialogue and responding to actions upon him.”<sup>32</sup> The insight here is that as social beings we are basically “responders”. Our response is based on the meaning we attach to “actions done to us.” The direct implication of this insight is that responsibility is rather more *caught* than *taught*. It then underscores moral responsibility as a quality of the “self” that is radically integral to its concrete community. Individuals and even groups are “responders” who tailor their actions based on their “interpretations” of prior actions upon them. In chapter three and four we shall explore the implication of this view not only in shaping moral responsibility but it does illumine the evolution of irresponsible actions.

Niebuhr asserts that the *self* knows *itself* only in relation to other *selves* within a concrete community. He draws insight from Herbert Mead and Martin Buber to underscore this social nature of the self who does not know itself in the “I-It” relation, but rather, only in the “I-thou”

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<sup>32</sup> Eric Mount, *Conscience and Responsibility*, p. 51.

relation that it comes to know itself as known.<sup>33</sup> It is therefore within the social context that one becomes not just moral beings but quintessentially one comes to know oneself as a “self.”

Another critical element of Niebuhr’s definition above is “accountability.” This does not mean mathematical accuracy, but the courage to face the consequences of one’s choices or “responses”. This is what it means in common language to have “integrity”. Integrity then is about honesty and consistency that defines the self. However, this does not imply a “mere consistency” of either thought or action since these could be possessed by psychopaths, sociopaths or the kind of persons we listed above. Integrity (taken here as a core aspect of responsibility) denotes a perceptible authenticity that characterizes the whole person’s conduct and bearing. In other words, it abhors all forms of deception or duplicity and it helps define the self as harmonious, whole and sound.<sup>34</sup> **John Rawls** elaborates this concept:

Here we should note that in times of social doubt and loss of faith in long established values, there is a tendency to fall back on the virtues of integrity: truthfulness and sincerity, lucidity and commitment, or, as some say, authenticity. If no one knows what is true, at least we can make our beliefs our own in our own way and not adopt them as handed to us by others.<sup>35</sup>

To reiterate, Rawls identifies “truthfulness” “commitment” [consistency] and lucidity” [or coherence] as “virtues of integrity.” He however argues that they are “virtues of form” and as such not adequate for an understanding of moral uprightness or objectivity except they are joined

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<sup>33</sup> R. H. Niebuhr, *ibid.* pp. 72-73. He argues, “The fundamental form of human association, it is seen, is not that contract society into which men enter as atomic individuals, making partial commitments to each other for the sake of gaining limited common ends or of maintaining certain laws; it is rather the face-to-face community in which unlimited commitments are the rule and in which every aspect of every self’s existence is conditioned by membership in the interpersonal group.” Niebuhr, *ibid.* p.73

<sup>34</sup> See Philip Selznick, *The Moral Commonwealth*, pp. 212-213.

<sup>35</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p. 455

to “appropriate conception of justice...”<sup>36</sup> What this means is that integrity is not about *content* but *form*. Though it represents a definitive mode of thinking, acting, or feeling but it does not specify the contents of judgments or choices we make. Selznick argues that “To act with integrity is to *have* values and *take them seriously*, but the values themselves may be diverse.”<sup>37</sup> However, he adds that form and content cannot be “radically separated” because the former impacts the latter. The “content” depends on our concept of the “good”, or as Rawls asserts, our concept of justice. In other words, if we have integrity, it does influence the choices we make.

An important point Selznick made, which is corroborated by evidence, was that in conditions of psychological stress, and where the “ego” is insecure, personal integrity is difficult to sustain. Though we agree with this claim, but we argue that it is precisely in such situations that the authenticity of one’s integrity is proven. Even in a country where bribery and corruption is rampant (systemic corruption), upholding integrity will prove an uphill task, but the fact is, that in such unscrupulous environments, we do find some people, by their morally responsible conduct, exhibit authentic integrity. The moral problematic is how to increase the proportion of those who act like that from “few” to “many”. Our first intuition is that “targeted formation” – that is, formation directed specifically at inculcating “specific virtues,” (of “integrity”) is critical for the moral goals of a given community. We shall reflect on this in the last chapter. The

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<sup>36</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p. 456 He holds that “tyrants” may display these qualities to a high degree. The question might be raised, “if someone like Hitler exhibits sincerity and commitment to what he considers his “values,” does he have integrity?” Rawls will say “yes,” if integrity is separated from justice; it is debatable what Niebuhr’s answer will be because of the nexus in his thoughts between self, community, context (time or history) and God. We however think his final answer will be “no” given the integral relation he finds between responsibility and conscience. Without a properly formed conscience, integrity becomes sterile regimentation. The “Islamic suicide bombers” have maintained “integrity of purpose in killing Westerners and liquidating their assets, but they exhibit a blind or *sterile rigidity* that often reveals a distortion – integrity without a clear notion of “justice” (or “love” or “mercy”).

<sup>37</sup> Philip Selznick, *The Moral Commonwealth*, p. 213.



implication of the foregoing is that, like most virtues, context is important for both the formulation and the formation of integrity and without which the notion of moral responsibility remains vacuous.

Therefore, *accountability* in this definition is a functional synonym of *integrity*, and considered to be a major part of the essence of moral responsibility. Accountability means taking one's values seriously; and to the extent that one is willing to bear the consequences of the values we live by *consistently*, to that extent we are supposedly deemed accountable and therefore exhibit integrity of purpose. However, while "consistency" is part of what defines "integrity," it does not mean "every persistent pattern" of either conduct or motivation is a mark of integrity.<sup>38</sup> This underscores the integral relationship between *form* and *content* in conceptualizing integrity.

Selznick is of the view that "virtues of integrity cannot guarantee morally right outcomes any more than due process of law can guarantee substantive justice."<sup>39</sup> He also holds that "virtues of reason" cannot guarantee moral outcomes given that these are qualities that are "necessarily detached from content" since it is their role to "assess the content of particular choices and patterns of conduct."<sup>40</sup> But he affirms that the degree of "*striving for integrity*" could enhance the probability of achieving moral uprightness just as the degree of "*striving for due process*" could enhance the probability of justice being done. The key then may be how to enhance this "striving" since there seem to be no other guarantees. We argue that due diligence

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p. 214

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p. 214 (The stress is his).

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p. 214

in conscience formation will invariably increase this striving. However, we cannot deny in this research the important role of grace in the practice of virtue of any form.<sup>41</sup>

Philip Selznick further distinguishes between *moral* and *aesthetic* integrity to underscore the fact that while “consistency” is a character of integrity in general, moral integrity is about “wholeness” of the personality and therefore cannot admit of duplicity. He insists that “it is the integrity of self, not of a specific activity, that matters most for moral experience.”<sup>42</sup> This view highlights “integrity” as having more to do with harmony of the whole personality than mere constancy as noted earlier. It is the harmonious relationship between one act and others acts of the same self that underscores moral integrity and therefore moral responsibility. An example may clarify this: Jones is a grade school football coach. He is talented, hardworking, and very

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<sup>41</sup> Though we do not intend to develop a theology of grace in this work, we feel inclined to stress here that human virtues acquired through effort are founded in and supported by God’s grace. We refer to St. Augustine, the Doctor of Grace, who argues that in the face of an inner cruel necessity (*peccati habendi dura necessitas*), an inner “existential condition” of a psychological nature, that compels us to choose evil such that we cannot achieve any lasting good without God’s grace that prepares, enables, and sustains all our efforts. He therefore holds that grace precedes us in everything: “Indeed we also work, but we are only collaborating with God who works, for his mercy has gone before us. It has gone before us so that we may be healed, and follow us so that once healed, we may be given life; it goes before us so that we may be called, and follows us so that we may be glorified; it goes before us so that we may live devoutly, and follows us so that we may always live with God: for without him we can do nothing.” *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, 17: PL 44, 901 cited in *The New Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (United States, Liguori Publications, 1994), p.484; Stephen Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace* (see reference below). Aquinas will follow this line of argument to hold that we need supernatural grace or habit to “consistently” do the good (See *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 109, a. 1-10). His earlier writings seem to support human capacity for achieving human virtues but seem influenced by Augustine’s anti-Pelagian writings. Pelagius concedes that Adam’s sin has a consequence – physiological, spiritual, and environmental effects. But he argues that these effects are not transmitted generatively but by imitation. We “re-enact” what Adam did through our own personal choices, and at length we are ensnared in sinful habits and create a society and an environment used to sinful customs and lifestyles. Grace for him is external rather than internal. The life of Christ is an exemplary grace – it illumines our own life path and empowers us from outside. In other words, human nature has the inner resources it needs to obey God’s commands for “he has not commanded the impossible”. A theologian like Stephen Duffy thinks that Pelagius did have a doctrine of Original sin except that it was presented differently: our individual sinful acts sediment into sinful habits and give rise to sinful social habits, structures, and customs that we today call social sin. For further reading on the foregoing, see Stephen J. Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace: Perspectives in Theological Anthropology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993, pp 75-119

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p. 214 He argues that while a dedicated artist is diligent to maintain the integrity of his work, he as a person may be distracted, confused, and deceptive. This hacks back to honesty as seen above.

much loved by his students. He won many awards for “best practices” consistently for three years. Then, he was caught molesting a boy, and subsequent investigation shows that this was a pattern that goes back many years. Is it possible that Jones has integrity as a coach but not as a person? If we follow Selznick’s stance on harmony, he can neither be said to possess integrity nor be considered a morally responsible person given the “inconsistency” that disrupts the *wholeness* (or integrity) of his other acts.

Selznick then makes a shift from conduct to structure in order to de-emphasize “acts” and “rules” and to rather emphasize the “effectiveness” of “organizations, of persons, institutions, and community”<sup>43</sup> as depending on its inner integrity.<sup>44</sup> To then speak of the “moral integrity” of an individual, institution, or community is a value judgment regarding its wholeness and/or soundness. Moral integrity is an evaluation that seeks to establish the *kind* of person, institution, or community in question. This point on ‘wholeness’ and “soundness” is critical for our understanding of moral responsibility because so much has been aggressively defended as “good” about African socio-moral structures by well-intentioned authors but until we show how these have actually helped Africa be a *healthier* and *wholesome* continent, we miss the point. Morality is a practical discipline. It either helps one live a better life or else it is redundant. So while we affirm the invaluable service African apologist have done in defending African

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* p.214

<sup>44</sup> We need to add here that “effectiveness” in this instance is preferred to “successfulness” of individual or organization because to be an effective member of a community essentially means adding in some way to its overall socio-economic, moral and/or spiritual health. The implication is that a company that is involved in fraudulent practices may become “successful” but not an “effective” member of society precisely because it destroys it from within.

institutions and values from its critics, we however think the time for retrospection and critical re-evaluation is urgently upon us.<sup>45</sup>

Selznick however points out that this evaluation is never made solely on the basis of an abstraction of an *ideal* of integrity but always in conjunction with its operative meaning determined by “historically situated capacities, constraints, and opportunities.”<sup>46</sup> This underscores the fact that “standards” have been historically conditioned. He maintains that “the *standard itself* cannot be known apart from a theory of what constitutes wholeness and soundness”<sup>47</sup> in a given context. We shall return to this point later for there is a distinctive nuance as to *what* constitutes “standards” or the “objectivity” of moral responsibility in the African context from that of the Western ethical orientation.

Historically, the first recorded explicit notion of moral responsibility was that articulated by Aristotle in his treatment of virtues.<sup>48</sup> It involves the criteria for determining when an action is to be considered blameworthy and by extension, praiseworthy. According to him, virtue is about finding the mean between excess. So, he argues that, the man who deviates little from goodness (either *more* or *less*) is not blamed except he “widely” deviates from it. But he admits the difficulty inherent in establishing what constitutes the mean (in this case, for blameworthiness). In his view, this may not be arrived at through reasoning as is anything involving the senses.

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<sup>45</sup> Two Nigerian Nobel laureates in literature, Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka vehemently defend African culture but also agree that what needs preserving ought to undergo critical evaluation. See E. E. Uzukwu, *God, Spirits, and Human Wholeness*, p. 56

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* p.215. Emphasis is his.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>48</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics, Op. Cit.*, Bk. II: 9. III: 1-12. We concede that the Homeric epics carry implicit references to this term and this is informed by earlier oral traditions as found in African traditional cultures.

Rather, our “perception” should guide us to determine what constitutes “excess” and blameworthy or the “mean” and therefore praiseworthy. Aristotle’s position still provides the outline of the debate: moral responsibility consists in blame or praise of someone based on a certain quality of his/her action (depending on how far it *harmonizes* or *departs* from its supposed mean). This led him to consider the moral agent as such and the characteristics he should possess: reason and/or capacity for deliberation. He then determined that *voluntariness* is the necessary conditions for blameworthiness.

Aristotle’s argument on moral responsibility needs to be seen in its wider context as a response to Plato’s view that moral failure (or irresponsibility) is a function of ignorance and needs to be overcome by knowledge (as wisdom) alone.<sup>49</sup> Aristotle insists on the acquisition of

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<sup>49</sup> Plato and Aristotle explored the reason for moral irresponsibility among humans. While Plato finds the answer in ignorance, Aristotle argues for “weakness of the will” with relevant qualifications. Plato identifies knowledge (as wisdom) as the highest virtue, and ignorance as the ultimate vice. According to him, it is “contrary to human nature” to choose that which is manifestly evil; and when faced with two evils we rather choose the lesser than the greater. He insists that nothing overcomes true knowledge – neither fear, pleasure, pain or any other affections (like love) would overcome a person with true knowledge since “wisdom is all the reinforcement he needs” as it is the “the most powerful element in human life.” So, even though he speaks of the value of virtue, he does so in the context of knowledge as the supreme virtue. He insists that whoever learns to distinguish the good from the bad will never be swayed to act contrary to that knowledge. Those who do evil do so as a consequence of ignorance *akrasia* (the very opposite of *true* knowledge) where evil is chosen disguised as the good. He argues in *Protagoras*, “To remind you of your question, it arose because we two agreed that there was nothing more powerful than knowledge, but that wherever it is found it always has the mastery over pleasure, and everything else. You, on the other hand maintain that pleasure often masters even the man who knows, asked us to say what this experience is, if it is not being mastered by pleasure. If we had answered you straight off that it is ignorance, you would have laughed at us, but if you laugh at us now, you will be laughing at yourselves as well, for you have agreed that when people make a wrong choice of pleasures and pains – that is, of good and evil – the cause of their mistake is lack of knowledge....So that is what being mastered by pleasure really is – ignorance” (Plato, *Protagoras*, 357, c-e). Evidently, this hacks back at the finitude of human knowing. However, anyone who had struggled with choice knows that we sometimes make “deliberate” wrong choices. Paradoxically, Plato also holds that the vicious is responsible for his acts. He distinguishes between *voluntary* and *involuntary* acts. Interestingly, only those who act with true knowledge act voluntarily; and all wrong doing is characterized as “involuntary” since the agents lack true knowledge. Those who deliberately make wrong choices do so based on inability to know the true good (ignorance). As he puts it, “To ‘act beneath yourself’ is pure ignorance; and to ‘be your own master’ is wisdom.” Aristotle will strongly disagree with Plato on this point. Aristotle on the one hand begins his ethical project by examining the object of human desire or “the good for man”. He identifies this ultimate object as *eudemonia* (happiness). According to him, the nature of a being is revealed through its “objective *teleos*” (the supreme end towards which it tends). In his analysis of human nature (a composite of body and soul with their varying functions) identifies *rationality* as what differentiates human beings from other lower forms of being (sentient and vegetative beings).

virtue as the answer to moral character. According to him, “virtue is a state of character” that disposes one to “choose the mean,” the middle point between excess and defect. It is a *habit* often “acquired through repetition of corresponding acts.”<sup>50</sup> It is therefore neither a passion nor a faculty. Aristotle argues as follows:

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Since tending towards the end is essential to the perfection of our nature, he distinguishes between *rational* and *irrational* parts in the human soul. The irrational consists of the *vegetative* and *appetitive* powers of the soul. The “rational” is essentially the intellect subdivided into *speculative* and *practical* intellect. He holds rationality as an essentially character of being human. Therefore, acting in accord with reason indicates one is properly ordered towards ends and happiness. However, though he acknowledges the supreme priority of reason over other faculties of the soul, he thinks it is rather simplistic to assume that ignorance is wholly responsible for human wrong doing. Recognizing the need for internal consistency for moral agency, he insists on human freedom (of choice), man is a free agent of his acts. As the moving principle of his own actions, he has the freedom to adapt to virtue or vice – to make good or bad choices and to act on them accordingly. *He insists that we are not born virtuous or vicious but “have it in our power” to become so through habit. This provides the basis for his insistence on training in virtue from childhood as the way to create morally upright persons (good citizens) or else abandon man to his basic tendencies.* He identifies “three things in the soul that control action and truth – sensation, reason, desire.” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI chapter 2). While sensation does not “originate action,” reason and desire play an integral role in moral action but only reason is concerned with truth. According to him, morality is about choice, and “choice is a deliberate desire of something in our own power;” therefore “both reasoning must be true and the desire right, if the choice is to be good and the latter must pursue just what the former asserts.” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1139 – 25). It is therefore reason, which seeks the truth that guides desire (appetite) which seeks the good. Aquinas would affirm in his commentary that “in order that there be perfection in action it is necessary that none of its principles be imperfect” (See, Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by C.P. Litzinger, Notre Dame: Dumb Ox Books, 1993, p. 360). Therefore, for Aristotle, since reason and desire concur in “choice,” it (choice) is the originating principle of action (as *efficient cause* - that is, of movement, as distinct from *final cause* concerned with “something” – the end); and the intellect (practical intellect) and sensitive appetite are the principles of choice (Aristotle asserts in *De Anima* that, “Both of these then are capable of originating local movement, mind and appetite: 1. Mind, that is, which calculates means to an end, i.e. mind practical (it differs from mind speculative in the character of its end); while (2) appetite is in every form of it relative to an end: for that which is the object of appetite is the stimulant of mind practical; and that which is last in the process of thinking is the beginning of the action. It follows that there is a justification for regarding these two as the sources of movement, i.e. appetite and practical thought; for the object of appetite starts a movement and as a result of that thought gives rise to movement, the object of appetite being to it a source of stimulation. So too when imagination originates movement, it necessarily involves appetite.” *BK. III, chapter 10*, 433a, 17-20. He claims that the speculative intellect does not move anything but concerned with truth (the absolutely true) or falsehood as its object. Aquinas explains that the “good” of the speculative intellect is “the absolutely true” and its evil is the “absolutely false.” In other words, the “essential function” of every intellect is “to express the true and the false.” But the manner of that expression is distinct for the speculative and practical intellect. The practical intellect is not concerned with the absolutely true (as does the speculative) but has “conformable truth” (that which conforms to right appetite) as its good. (Aquinas, *Commentary*, p.360). We shall see in Chapter two how this relates to conscience. It is important to note that Aristotle concedes that appetite (through its object) and practical intellect constitute the source of movement involved in moral action.

<sup>27</sup>Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, BK II: Chapter I

Virtue, then, being of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual virtue in the main owes both its birth and growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time), while moral virtue comes about as a result of habit, whence also its name *ethike* is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word *ethos* (habit). From this *it is also plain that none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature; for nothing that exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature...Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and made perfect by habit...Thus, in one word, states of character arise out of like activities....It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference.*<sup>51</sup>

He admits that a virtuous life is difficult (because it causes sorrow and pain) but when attained, life becomes pleasant. Moreover, determining what constitutes the mean is “difficult to attain” such that determining blameworthiness in particular instances is often not arrived at merely by reasoning but by perception.<sup>52</sup> According to him, virtue is about the mean and it is in our power to acquire it. He argues thus:

The end, then, being what we wish for, the mean what we deliberate about and choose, actions concerning means must be according to choice and voluntary. Now the exercise of the virtues is concerned with means. Therefore virtue also is in our own power, and so too vice. For where it is in our power to act it is also in our power not to act, and vice versa...Now if it is in our power to do noble or base acts, and likewise in our power not to do them, and this is what being good or bad meant, then it is in our power to be virtuous or vicious.<sup>53</sup>

The claim that “it is in our power” to live virtuously generates debate but Roman Catholic theology disagrees with all philosophy that makes this claim precisely because it insists that grace is necessary for a virtuous life. Aristotle, a pagan philosopher, however insists on our ability to live virtuously through repetition. But given the experience of a preponderance of bad

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<sup>51</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk II: Chapter I, 15-20, 1103b:20 The emphasis is ours.

<sup>52</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II: Chapter 9.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, Book III: Chapter 5 (1113b: 5-10)

choices and actions, he admits the role of ignorance but qualifies this. He affirms that acts done under ignorance or compulsion are *involuntary* but with further qualifications. “Compulsion” indicates the influence of an external principle of action without the moral agent contributing anything. He admits an inherent difficulty in categorizing the voluntariness of certain specific acts of mixed nature. He differentiates “non-voluntary” from “involuntary” acts done as a result of ignorance. A person who acts in ignorance but is not repentant acts “non-voluntarily” while he that feels pain and remorse is considered to have acted “*involuntarily*.” He distinguishes acting by “reason of ignorance” and “acting *in* ignorance.” A drunk, for instance, acts under the influence of drunkenness but unknowingly misbehaves (acts *in* ignorance). But he who is ignorant of the particulars – of the circumstances of an action and its objectives or end (especially with regard to important points) acts by reason of ignorance and therefore involuntarily.<sup>54</sup>

Aristotle’s notion of *voluntary* action is “that of which the moving principle is in the agent himself, he being aware of the particular circumstances of the action.”<sup>55</sup> Therefore, actions proceeding from passion or anger are not considered involuntary because they actually proceed from the agent and are his acts. He argues that “**wickedness is voluntary**” and being careless, dishonest, unjust or self-indulgent are therefore voluntary.

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, Book III: Chapter I. According to him, “every wicked man is ignorant of what he ought to do and what he ought to abstain from, and it is by reason of error of this kind that men become unjust and in general bad; but the term ‘involuntary’ tend to be used not if a man is ignorant of what is to his advantage – for it is not mistaken purpose that causes involuntary action (it leads to wickedness), nor ignorance of the universal (for that men are blamed), but ignorance of particulars, i.e. of the circumstances of the action and the objects with which it is concerned. For it is on these that both pity and pardon depend, since the person who is ignorant of any of these acts involuntarily.” *NE* 1110b: 25-30.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*. 1111a: 25.



Now not to know that it is from the exercise of activities on particular objects that states of character are produced is the mark of a *thoroughly senseless person*. Again it is irrational to suppose that a man who acts unjustly does not wish to be unjust or a man who acts self-indulgently to be self-indulgent. But if without being ignorant a man does the things which will make him unjust, he will be unjust voluntarily. Yet it does not follow that if he wishes he will cease to be unjust as will be just. For neither does the man who is ill become well on those terms...So too, to the unjust and to the self-indulgent man, it was open at the beginning not to become men of this kind, and so they are unjust and self-indulgent voluntarily; but now that they have become so it is not possible for them not to be so.<sup>56</sup>

Aristotle evidently makes an important point here. He insists that it is irrational to consistently make bad choices and expect a different result. The unjust man (or the corrupt person) becomes so by choice – a series of bad choices such that at some point he loses the power to reverse the outcome given the force of habit. This latter situation, of being powerless to reverse an outcome, does not exonerate him. In like manner he refutes the claim that men choose the apparent “good” (what seems best to them) whose appearance is not in their control. He rejects this excuse for wrongdoing by affirming that the “end appears to each man in a form in accord with his character” and “each person is responsible for the state of his mind” and therefore the “appearance” of the good he chooses.<sup>57</sup> This conforms to modern aphorism: “we become what we think.” And since we can control our thought, we are responsible for the content of our thoughts that shape who we become. According to Aristotle, even if we hold that the end is fixed by nature, then the only way to consider virtue voluntary is that the good man “adopts the means voluntarily” and by implication, the bad man “voluntarily” does not.

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, Book III: Chapter 5 (1114a:5-20). The stress is ours. This argument is of critical import despite critiques of it.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, Book III: Chapter 5 (1114b).

To further clarify this point, Aristotle distinguishes between the *continent* and *incontinent* on one hand, and the *temperate* and *self-indulgent* (intemperate) person, on the other, to underscore the nature of choice. The *incontinent* man acts with “appetite” but not with choice, the *continent* man acts with choice rather than appetite. This perhaps is the distinction in Aristotle that serves as a basic critique to David Hume who considers reason as a “slave” to the appetite. The continent man, following the dictates of reason, resists acting on his desires that he knows are evil, but the incontinent disregards reason, for even though he knows his desires are evil he still acts on it due to the influence of passion. The *self-indulgent* person however is led by choice, for he voluntarily decides (judges) that he will always pursue present pleasure. This distinguishes him from the *incontinent* man who, though he knows his desires are evil, pursues it by force of passion. This is why Aristotle considers self-indulgence as identical with wickedness in those instances where someone’s choices affect others. In his view, incontinence is better than self-indulgence because while it is possible for the incontinent to repent and change, the self-indulgent is obstinate and hardly will change.

Interestingly, regarding the object of willing, Aristotle concedes that the “end,” absolutely speaking, is the *object of the will*. However, this appears to different people in different ways as “apparent good”. For the virtuous, it is what appears truly good that is the object of his will, but for the vicious, it is what is pleasing (or pleasurable). He argues:

The good man perhaps is much different in his capacity to see what is truly good in individual matters, being as it were a norm and measure of these things. Many men are *apparently deceived* because of pleasure. What is not good seems good, so they desire as good the pleasurable and seek to avoid the painful as evil.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book III: Chapter 4 (1113a29-33). The stress is ours.

Evidently, with this position, Aristotle seems to come back to Plato's view that ultimately, wrong choices are the consequences of ignorance. There are however important insights from his arguments: First is the stress he places on the acquisition of virtue as the answer moral character. According to him, this has to be drilled from childhood so that it becomes second nature (a habit). Part of our argument in this research is the need to recover or develop some healthy *forms* or models of moral formation in our different moral communities if we are to build or rebuild our social institutions.

Secondly, he recognized the necessity of freedom of choice for moral agency, and that in itself presupposes rationality. Thirdly, he insists that the unjust man, the self-indulgent (the corrupt) become so by *choice* and to think that one can consistently make irresponsible choices hoping that this will not impact one's character is a mark of irrationality. Today we acknowledge that consistently making irresponsible choices expecting a different result is an apt definition of insanity. It is our hope that we take this seriously since they tend to challenge our common assumptions. Aristotle's distinctions between the continent and incontinent, temperate and self-indulgent remain classical in the discourse on *choice*, *ignorance* and *weakness of the will*.

We do admit both *ignorance* and *weakness of the will* are involved in moral failure which is why "targeted formation" will constitute part of the recommendation of this research. However, our argument is that without appropriate conscience formation, both of these human deficiencies (*ignorance* of the true good and *weakness of the will*, a certain proclivity to bad choices) become highly activated and lead definitively to irresponsible choices and acts. The situation is similar to when one lacks proper or adequate physical exercises; it leaves one prone to all kinds of health hazards. When our mind (seat of knowledge) and heart (seat of desires and

willing) are not properly exercised through basic and ongoing formation, it leads to a myriad of distortions in our choices and results in moral diseases or pathologies.

Despite the insights gleaned from Aristotle's views above, there are inherent ambiguity in Aristotle's treatment of the concept of moral responsibility that lends itself to different interpretations. Therefore overtime there emerged different viewpoints on the notion.<sup>59</sup> Historically, *fatalism* is a concept that arises out of the oldest effort at comprehending human moral responsibility. In the Homeric epic we see "blame" and "praise" used interchangeably based on actions of persons. However, some actions are excused on the pretext that factors beyond his/her control influenced the action. A classic example is Oedipus' action that is excused on grounds that he was "fated" or predetermined by the "gods" or "stars" to act in such manner. Therefore, he is not responsible for his actions. While determinism (fatalism) as an argument hinged on influence from "gods" has diminished, its philosophical counterpart continues to exert influence. Part of Aristotle's argument on voluntariness is aimed at refuting this trend of thought by establishing freedom of choice as the basic criteria for moral agency.

A historical overview of the philosophical argument on moral responsibility from Aristotle to the current debate provides useful insights. According to Eshleman, two interpretative viewpoints ("merit based view" and the "consequentialist view") compete for prominence. The first ascribes blame or praise to an agent's action "if and only if" he "merits" such ascription. The second ascribes blame or praise if and only if it will result in change of behavior in the agent. Though it is not clear which view Aristotle actually endorsed, but he did

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<sup>59</sup> For a historical overview of this debate we follow here the insights of Andrew Eshleman, See Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Moral Responsibility" by Andrew Eshleman, *online edition*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2009/entries/moral-responsibility/>

argue against a version of determinism, as already noted. Eshleman presents three versions of determinism that Aristotle could not have recognized in his writings (especially, *On Interpretations*): *Causal determinism* that holds everything as caused by “sufficient antecedent conditions” that it could not be otherwise. This includes human actions. It differs from “fatalism” as such in that while fatalism does not consider human deliberation and choice as of any consequence, causal determinism considers human choice as a necessary link in the realization of such determined events.<sup>60</sup>

*Scientific determinism* is a variant of the first and identifies the “laws of nature” operating in the universe as such as *the* antecedent condition. *Theological determinism* lays the burden on the “nature and will of God” instead of on stars or gods more prevalent in ancient religions. Theological determinism actually did influence the theological discourse we find in Augustine and Aquinas (medieval period) as they struggled to understand the origin of evil against the implication of God’s providence, his absolute power and especially his foreknowledge. What is the significance of human freedom in the light of God’s foreknowledge? Their views on predetermination remain controversial theological themes we do not have space to pursue.

The modern period saw a focus on scientific determinism given the ascendancy of natural science applying mechanistic models of the universe that tends to explain everything by physical laws – including human actions. Opinions were however divided as to the implication of such explanation on human freedom, with some arguing that it does not pose any problem to freedom and hence moral responsibility. On the broader issue of causal determinism, two major schools

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<sup>60</sup> For further reading on this see, Susan S. Meyer, “Moral Responsibility: Aristotle and After,” in *Everson* 1998: 225-227; Terrance Irwin, ed. *Classical Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 243-249.

emerged over time: the *incompatibilist* hold that moral responsibility is impossible if causal determinism were to be true. The compatibilists hold the opposite view – determinism does not threaten moral responsibility. Eshleman thinks that Epicurians and Stoics represent classical examples of how these opposing worldviews among the ancients influenced lifestyle choices.<sup>61</sup> He thinks that “how one interprets the concept of moral responsibility strongly influences one’s overall account” of the theme.<sup>62</sup> Historically, those that accept *merit* based account lean towards *incompatibilism* and those that accept the *consequentialist* viewpoint tend towards *compatibilism*.<sup>63</sup> These two schools continue to gain currency even today. The critical core of their position is the assumption that an external theoretical criteria of either efficacy or metaphysical freedom (merit) justifies holding the agent responsible.

P. F. Strawson’s landmark essay “Freedom and resentment” dismisses both viewpoints as wrong. He offered a different perspective on the debate. He argues that both schools miss the point when they consider an a priori judgment external to the agent is a sufficient condition for establishing or justifying the agent’s moral responsibility. According to him, the attitudes of praise and blame are part of a wider range of attitudes we express towards those with whom we are immersed in a personal relationship. Our attitudes are “participant reactive attitudes” disclosing resentment, indignation, love, care, indifference, goodwill or ill-will.<sup>64</sup> These *reactive attitudes* are open to change as more facts are known such that one’s situation could “excuse” or

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<sup>61</sup> Andrew Eshleman, “Moral Responsibility,” *Op. Cit.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>63</sup> He includes Epicurus, early Augustine, Thomas Reid, Immanuel Kant among incompatibilists; and Stoics, Thomas Hobbes, David Hume, and J. S. Mill, are among compatibilists. See Eshleman, *Ibid*. p. 8.

<sup>64</sup> P.F. Strawson, “freedom and Resentment,” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 48 (1962); 1-25 Reprinted in Fischer and Ravizza, 1993, cited in Eschelman, *Ibid*. p.10.

“justify” the agent’s attitude. Therefore judgment could be suspended so long as such condition persists. In such a situation, adopting “objective standpoint” that brackets the person out of the circle of “participants” in a temporal or permanent manner based on the interpretation of the agent’s condition. Children and mentally ill are permanently excluded from the circle of participants because they are considered incapable of genuinely participating in a personal relation.

Strawson criticized the two schools above for “over intellectualizing” the notion of moral responsibility.<sup>65</sup> Instead of presuming an external theoretical judgment of efficacy or merit as the rational basis that justifies moral responsibility, he reverses that by establishing it on wholly internal criteria of feeling. We hold people accountable or responsible based on the relationship we share together with them – we “feel” this way as a way of being human. It is embedded in our psychological makeup and therefore does not need an external criteria or justification. Even the judgment that verifies the condition of the agent depends on principle internal to the practice rather than on an external criteria.<sup>66</sup> Therefore seeking justification for holding someone responsible “if determinism is true” becomes a redundant question. His argument is that we are *wired internally to hold accountable so long as they are participating in a relationship with us.*

The central commonplace that I want to insist on is the very great importance that we attach to the attitudes and intentions towards us of other human beings, and the great extent to which our personal feelings and reactions depend upon, or involve, our beliefs about these attitudes and intentions.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Strawson, *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays*, New York: Routledge, 1974, p.25.

<sup>66</sup> Strawson, *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays*, New York: Routledge, 1974, p.19

<sup>67</sup> Strawson, *Freedom and Resentment, ibid.*, p. 5

While there are evident oppositions to Strawson's argument,<sup>68</sup> the import of his insight cannot be lost to this research. Actually, his view corroborates Niebuhr's position on the definition of moral responsibility. Niebuhr holds that it is a "response" based on an "interpretation" of action done to us implying "accountability" for our "response" and possible only in "solidarity" within a community of moral agents. We shall revisit this view on "reactive attitudes" as a critical criterion for moral responsibility in other chapters (two to five) when we explain the role of "perception" in the development of moral responsibility.

We noted above that what constitutes the "content" of a morally responsible act is determined by both objective standards and its specific historical context in line with the debate on what constitutes a moral act. Strawson brackets some agents from being "participants" because our "reactive attitudes" are based on the assumption the agent has the capacity to enter into genuine relationship with us. This implies acting responsibly presupposes that one has moral agency (the capacity for reasoning, deliberation, and freedom of choice). The only aspect we wish to consider in this direction is the assumption that the moral agent is considered an "integral self" – a morally competent unit, "a person." Let us now turn to explore what this term means.

## **1.2 Personhood**

The notion of "person" is one that generates debate. What criterion constitutes personhood? Of what relevance is this notion? We appreciate the insight of Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II) not merely for his contemporariness but for his depth. While maintaining the

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<sup>68</sup> See Andrew Eshleman, "Moral Responsibility," *Op. Cit.* p. 13-18. Cites Fischer and Ravizza (among others) to have argued that it is possible to critique existing practices from a standpoint outside it which then could justify a theoretical criteria one of which might be compatibilism or incompatibilism. We agree that such evaluation is not just possible but necessary unless we hold an absolute relativist concept of knowledge and truth.



Aristotelian-Thomist metaphysical tradition, he was able to incorporate Scheler's insight from phenomenology in exposing this notion. He adopts the classical definition articulated by Boethius and used by Aquinas: *persona est rationalis naturae individua substantia* ["a person is an individual of a rational nature"] but noted its inadequacy. It is presupposed that "persona" here stands for a "human being". A rational nature subsists in a subject – in a person. The idea of "*individua substantia*" goes back to Aristotle's *hylomorphism* that sees the human being as composed of *matter* and *form* which together constitutes one undivided substance – an "individual substance" is in this instance, called a human being. Following Aristotle, Aquinas holds that matter is the *principle of individuation*; and the rational soul [*anima rationalis*] is the animating principle of the whole human organism because it is the "substantial form" of the body and by virtue of which a human being is regarded as a "person." Aquinas elaborates in the *Prima pars* (questions 75-83) treatises on the *essence* of the soul, its *unity* and *powers*.<sup>69</sup>

Wojtyla argues that "neither the idea of rational nature nor its individualization seems to express fully the specific completeness expressed by the concept of person."<sup>70</sup> He holds that the rational soul as the principle and source of life and activity of the human person is composed of faculties (primarily of intellect and will) through which it executes its operations and by which therefore the human person actualizes full potentials. There are other secondary faculties of the soul (cognitive and appetitive) that are of a spiritual nature but dependent on matter (the body) for their operations and help shape the psychological and moral personality of the human subject.

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<sup>69</sup> See especially T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I. Q. 75, a 5

<sup>70</sup> Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, definitive ed., Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, trans. Andrzej Potocki, in *Analecta Husserliana: The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research 10*, ed. (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing, 1977), xiii

All faculties of the soul work together in the development of the human person.<sup>71</sup> He however draws insight from Max Scheler who holds a different view of person. According to Scheler,

The person is the concrete and essential unity of being of acts of different essences which in itself ...precedes all essential act-differences (especially the difference between inner and outer perception, inner and outer willing, inner and outer feeling, loving and hating, etc.). The being of the person is thereof the “foundation” of all essentially different acts.<sup>72</sup>

The implication is that Scheler sees the person neither as a substance nor as a specifically rational being but rather as an actor, “a pure-act-center” whereby the “whole person is contained in every fully concrete act, and the whole person “varies” in and through every act—without being exhausted in his being in any of these acts and without changing like a thing in time....”<sup>73</sup>

He therefore rejects the notion of being that is traditionally positioned as necessary for safeguarding the identity of the individual person. He views the person as a “unifier of diverse acts.” He insists that a being engaged solely in rational activity is not a person. The notion of “individual substance” is important, at least in Western Metaphysics, because it is assumed that this preserves the notion of “concrete existence” and the philosophical principle: *operari sequitor esse* (for something to act it must first exist). It is also presumed to preserve the notion of unity (or integrity) of “being”.

Scheler’s insight above helps Wojtyla to view the person as beyond mere rational activity but includes actions. While acknowledging the need for objective existence (*supositum*) of this

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<sup>71</sup> See for the foregoing, Wojtyla, *Op. Cit.* p. 168-9

<sup>72</sup> Max Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values: A New Attempt toward the Foundation of an Ethical Personalism*, trans. Manfred S. Frings and Roger L. Funk (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), xvii, xxiv

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 384-5

“*individua substantia*” he maintains that it is “action that reveals the person”. The individual is not just a static quantity like stone or tree (objects of existence) but he is a subject – he knows himself as a subject, and knows himself as known. Though this “self-consciousness” of the ego is at the center of personhood but its deeper value is precisely because it provides the possibility for morality, for performing *loving acts*. The person is then essentially a spiritual being whose essence does not just consist in rationality (thinking) as Aristotle-Boethius-Aquinas holds but also involves actions through which he fulfills his personhood. He will eventually posit that morality, and more specifically, acts of love alone that “fulfills” the person as it integrates the subjective and objective dimensions of his/her existence.

Wojtyla would however correct Scheler’s rejection of substance as problematic because it disregards the “moment of efficacy” when the individual recognizes himself as the source of his actions. Here, he argues, is revealed the integral nature of the person as substance, subject, and agent.<sup>74</sup> Wojtyla would eventually critique some modern philosophical views that indulge in what he calls a “hypostatization of consciousness” that creates a serious bifurcation between body and soul such that “consciousness” is presumed as an independent subject of activity with an indirect existence parallel to that of the body. This dualism creates a tendency to identify person with mere consciousness.<sup>75</sup> Wojtyla argues in line with Aquinas, that consciousness and self-consciousness do not subsist in themselves but rather subsists in the person as a form of “fruit of a rational nature”. In this way a unity of being is preserved along with autonomy such that the human person could retain the status of a free agent of his/her acts. Therefore the human

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<sup>74</sup> See Jameson Taylor, *Beyond Nature*, p.3.

<sup>75</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, p. 169

person as a “subsistent subject of existence and action”<sup>76</sup> is free and responsible for his/her acts.

While Aquinas concedes with Aristotle that intellect and will are the primary faculties of the human soul the possession of which constitutes the essence of personhood, a clarification from

Wojtyla reads:

Although thought is the basis of the creativity in which we express ourselves as persons, this creativity neither ends nor culminates in thought. That which is most characteristic of a person, that in which a person (at least in the natural order) is most fully and properly realized, is morality. Morality is not the most strictly connected with thought; thought is merely a condition of morality. Directly, however, morality is connected with freedom, and therefore with the will. The object of the will is the good. There are a variety of goods we can will. The point is to will a true good. Such an act of the will makes us good human beings. To be morally good, we must not only will something good, but we must also will it in a good way. If we will it in a bad way, we ourselves will become morally bad. Morality, therefore, presupposes knowledge, the truth concerning the good, but it is realized by willing, by choice, by decision. In this way, not only does our will become good or evil, but our whole person also becomes good or evil. Thanks to our will, we are masters of ourselves and of our actions, but because of this the value of these actions of our will qualifies our whole person positively or negatively.<sup>77</sup>

Apart from other possible observations, what we consider pertinent in the above is the shift in emphasis from intellect to will as having a certain priority of place in the characterization of personhood. Of course the reason for this is that he considers morality as a form of conceptual context in which full personhood is realized. His stress on “morality” and/or “action” as revealing the person or in defining personhood is significant because it resonates with the African view of personhood that is based thoroughly a socio-moral concept of person. Of course he does explore as well the relationship between the individual person and the community underscoring the need for correlation between the person’s good and the common good. It is often the disparity between these two poles that give rise to the evils associated with individuals

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<sup>76</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, p. 167

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* p.172

and society. Placing a stress on the will in conceptualizing morality will be considered further in this chapter but we need to affirm that scholarly views especially from social sciences suggest a consensus that capacities for cognition and affectivity distinguish personalities that are personally and socially responsible.<sup>78</sup> Before examining this latter aspect, let us make a brief review of some other perspectives on personhood.

Philip Selznick asserts that etymologically, the notion of “person” implies “particularity, coherence, and responsibility.”<sup>79</sup> Its Latin and Greek roots (*persona, prosopon*) refer to *masks* used by actors and the role they play. It is expected that they play well these roles. *Personhood is often defined by one’s place or the role one plays in society, and to effectively play those roles is a critical criterion for defining social responsibility.*<sup>80</sup> He argues that historically, Anglo-American law thrived on what he calls the “law of persons”, where everyone has his place in society (as “slave, serf, master, servant, ward, infant, husband, wife, cleric, king”), and the privileges of rank and positions are recognized by law. The parameters of “kinship, locality, religion and social rank” determine social relationships as well as provide avenue for “moral grace and practical virtue”.<sup>81</sup>

However, in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century this “law of persons” gave way to the “law of progress” in a paradigm shift from status to contract. Selznick argues that the result of this shift was a reduction of persons to objects – as “individual units of investment, labor, or consumption. Their

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<sup>78</sup> Susan Dwyer, “Moral Development and Moral Responsibility,” *The Monist*, Vol. 86 (2003:2), 181+

<sup>79</sup> Philip Selznick, *Op. Cit.* p. 216.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, p.217

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*

special identities are lost in the egalitarian, free-market imagery of “economic man.” The group becomes an aggregate or, at best, a composite of freely chosen individual arrangements.”<sup>82</sup> This orchestrated the rise of individualism and its subsequent advantages (freedom, equality, self-government, self-affirmation, opportunity to define rights and determine one’s place in the strata of society) to say nothing of its negative consequences most of which we are still grappling with today. He warns that the lessons we should draw from the ills of individualism today is that for us to craft a more adequate understanding of personhood, we should give “full weight to *self-affirming* participation in a moral order.”

Respect for individuals as persons requires that we “regard and act towards [them] in their concrete specificity, that we take full account of their specific aims and purposes and of their own definition of their [social] situations.” In other words, the person as an object of moral concern can never be an abstraction, never be wholly subordinated to social needs never be dissolved into a group or process.<sup>83</sup>

We note carefully his caveat, especially the last line on dissolving the person “into a group or process.” This will be given consideration later when we consider the African view of person. Selznick’s argument is that a person possesses a moral unity that is a counterweight to the demands of the common good. There are certain things a person (as a moral unit) may never give up for the sake of the common good – what Bernard Williams calls “the ground project” which is a set of commitments that together constitute a moral identity and source of meaning for living at all.<sup>84</sup> This personal identity that has a moral foundation constitutes in itself a source of conflict

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>83</sup><sup>83</sup> *Ibid*. He, cites Steven Lukes, *Individualism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973), p.148

<sup>84</sup> Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 14 cited by Selznick, *Ibid*, p.218

between individuals and others (families and friends) and society. This is an expression of the reality of autonomy that characterizes individuals as “persons” and therefore moral agents. It also determines their uniqueness in a community of moral agents. A community remains a gathering of individual persons *united in will for a common purpose* and should not be conceived as a mere collectivity. As “personhood” recovers the individual from the danger of being reduced to an object or lost in a collectivity, so also is an adequate notion of personhood threatened by an exaggerated “individualism” that pretends to an absolute autonomy without reference to a community. We shall return to this as we consider personhood and responsibility.

Anthropological accounts of personhood show a disparity of views between the terms, person, self, and individual.<sup>85</sup> Gracia Harris argues that “person refers to human beings who have agency; self to human beings as centers of experience; and individual to living human entities.”<sup>86</sup> Nancy Rosenberger, contra western of view of ‘autonomous’ individual, presents Japanese sense of self as an “interactive process that is molded through social relationships.” In this instance, the “self” absorbs both the concept of “person and individual” allowing at the same time for ambiguities and seeming contradictions.<sup>87</sup> A. L. Epstein argues that maintaining a distinction between person, self, and individual is difficult because among the Tolai of Papua New Guinea, a communal criterion is needed for “achieving personhood”.<sup>88</sup> We shall see later that this holds

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<sup>85</sup> See Andrew Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart, “Seeking Personhood: anthropological accounts and local concepts in Mount Hagen, Papua New Guinea,” *Oceania*, Vol. 68 (3) 1998: 170+

<sup>86</sup> Grace Harris, “Concepts of the Individual, Self, and person in description analysis,” in *American Anthropologist* 91 (3):599-612 cited by Andrew Strathern, Pamela J. Stewart, Seeking Personhood, *Ibid*.

<sup>87</sup> See Andrew Strathern *et al. Ibid*.

<sup>88</sup> A.L Epstein, Aspects of Person, Self, and Individual among the Tolai. Cited in Andrew Strathern, P. J. Stewart, *Ibid*

true for most Africans as well – personhood is “achieved” through a socio-cultural process than an ontologically necessary quality that everyone possesses. Geoffrey Kirkpatrick defines persons as “points of intersection between the subjective and the social... constructs deemed capable of experience, will, action, identity.”<sup>89</sup> Brian Morris sees the person as “embodied, conscious, and a social being with language and moral agency.”<sup>90</sup> The tendency here is either to distinguish the “individual” from the “self” or “person,” or to subsume one under the other. There is also a tendency among scholars from other regions to critique the Western approach that stresses individualism in conceptualizing personhood as far from being normative.

Literary evidence shows that Asian and African views agree to the degree they both see personhood emerging out of a determinate social process and hence tend to favor holism rather than individualism.<sup>91</sup> In India, for instance, Marriot speaks of “substance code complex” where “code” stands for moral conduct and “substance” stands for “body”. They do not form a duality but a unity. He says, “Codes are embodied in persons and substance flow between them.” However, “persons do not stand for “indivisible units” (individuals), but rather “dividuals” because they are always divisible as “substance codes.”<sup>92</sup> Roy Wagner’s view of the Melanesian “big man” as a “fractal person,” understood *not* as “a unit standing in relation to an aggregate,”

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<sup>89</sup> Geoffrey White and John Kirkpatrick, eds. “Person, Self and Experience: Exploring Pacific Ethnopsychologies,” (California: Berkeley, University of California Press), 1985, pp.9-26, cited by Andrew Strathern, Pamela J. Stewart, *Seeking Personhood*, *Ibid*.

<sup>90</sup> Andrew Strathern, Pamela J. Stewart, “Seeking Personhood: Anthropological Accounts and local concepts in Mount Hagen, Papua New Guinea.” *Ibid*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>92</sup> See Andrew Strathern and P. J. Stewart, *Ibid*. p. 3



or vice versa, but “always an entity with relationship integrally implied”.<sup>93</sup> Strathern and Stewart show how “alignment” with others is an “active shaping” principle for achieving personhood in that there is a constant openness to relationship. Hence among the Papua New Guinea, relationship underscores the concept of “norman”. It can mean personality, mind, intention, will, agency, social conscience, or desire. It’s meaning shifts with context. But children are not born with “norman”, rather it develops in humans as they begin to form concepts and understand language. This means a progressive differentiation over time as one interacts with others. The ideal for developing a correctly differentiated *norman* is in maintaining “proper relationships.”<sup>94</sup> That the foregoing shares some with African view of personhood which we now examine below.

### 1.3. African View of Personhood

African life revolves around the primary community. In most of Africa, it is the community that gives meaning to individual life. In places where this priority is entrenched, it is inconceivable how the individual can exist outside the community. This implies a view of “person” that is intrinsically connected to the notion of community. **I.A Menkiti** helps us encapsulate this African view of personhood:

Whereas the Western view of man abstract this or that feature of the lone individual and proceed to make it the defining or essential characteristic which entities aspiring to the description ‘man’ must have, the African view of man denies that persons can be defined by focusing on this or that physical or psychological characteristic of the lone individual. Rather, man is defined by reference to the enviroing community. As John Mbiti notes, the African view of the person can be summed up in this statement: *‘I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.’*<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Roy Wagner, “Speaking for Others: Power and Identity as factors in Daribi mediumistic hysteria.” *Journal de la Societe des Oceanistes* 33:144-152 cited by Andrew Strathern and P. J. Stewart, *Ibid.* p.4.

<sup>94</sup> See Andrew Strathern and P. J. Stewart, *Ibid.* p. 5.

<sup>95</sup> Ifeanyi A. Menkiti, “Person and Community in African Traditional Thought,” in *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, eds. Richard A. Wright (New York: University Press of America, 1984), p.171.

J.S. Mbiti is credited with being the first to articulate that one liner: “*I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am,*”<sup>96</sup> an insight based on a reversal of Descartes’ “*cogito ergo sum*” implying a significant paradigmatic shift in the African view of person compared to that of the West. Menkiti’s view above that elucidates J.S. Mbiti’s original insight condenses the essential element of the relationship between the individual and the community. **P. Ikuenobe** researched extensively on this and posits that “the relationship between an individual and the community and the responsibility that is dictated by this relationship indicate the foundation for moral reasoning, moral principles, and moral education in African cultures.”<sup>97</sup> While the distinction he makes between metaphysical/ontological account of personhood and the moral/normative remains ambiguous, it is noteworthy that he considers the moral concept of person (African model) as presupposing the metaphysical model (Western model). The moral or “normative model” is based on social recognition.

According to Ikuenobe, personhood is conferred by the community based on experience of the individual’s ability to fulfill certain standards of behavior critical to the wellbeing of the community. While the ontological model tends to define the nature and/or describe the make-up of an object (of animal species but within the genus ‘human’) as composing of faculties of mind, body, and soul, the African view of person, presupposing the foregoing, confers personhood not on every human being but on those who meet certain socio-moral criteria set forth by the

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<sup>96</sup> J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), pp. 108-9.

<sup>97</sup> Polycarp Ikuenobe, *Philosophical Perspectives on Communalism and Morality in African Traditions* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006), p.51.

community. Hence while a necessary relationship does exist between the two models, he argues that only the normative model is relevant to the form of communalism unique to African culture. This view has been criticized by other Africans who argue that personhood is neither “acquired” nor “achieved” through socialization, but a property of any human being.<sup>98</sup> **Kwame Gyekye** however admits that it is still a valid account because it “adumbrates moral conception of personhood” relevant to understanding the “communitarian framework” practiced in Africa.<sup>99</sup> K. Gyekye actually presents a view of personhood among the Akan of Ghana that share lots of similarities with the Western view.<sup>100</sup> There are therefore divergent opinions as to which view best describes the concept of person among the different ethnicities in Africa, including Nigeria.

For example, Elochukwu E. Uzukwu holds an African notion of personhood that arguably incorporates the individual, the community, and divinity (or deity) underscoring a complex relationship. He not only insists that “relationality” (as “duality or multiplicity”) is the foundational “norm of being in the world,”<sup>101</sup> but that it represents the interpretive lens through which to view the African mind, its concepts, and its institutions. He argues that the African

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<sup>98</sup> Kwame Gyekye, “Person and Community in Akan Thought” in *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, ed., Richard A. Wright (New York: University Press of America, 1984), p. 174. This view of Gyekye has been criticized as “New Africanist agenda” by Ikuenobe.

<sup>99</sup> Kwame Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.49

<sup>100</sup> He argues that three characteristics: *okra*, *sunsum*, and *honam* (or *nipadua*) are essential for personhood. *Okra* is the equivalent of the “soul” in Western metaphysics. It is a “divine spark” and “transmitter of individual’s destiny”. He admits K. Wiredu’s objection to his interpretation arguing in favor of seeing *okra* as quasi-physical quality that represents life in the individual. Wiredu insists that *Okra* has all to do with “life,” and nothing to do with “thought.” *Honam* (body) and *sunsum* (spirit) are other characteristics that *Akan* authors give different roles in the realization of personhood. Some claim *sunsum* is what “determines character and destiny of individuals” others think it is not “spirit” but reveals the relationship of body to the soul (or personality). See Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*, Revised ed. (Philadelphia, Pa: Temple University Press, 1995), 85-7 <http://www.questia.com/read/55031914>.

<sup>101</sup> Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *God, Spirits, and Human Wholeness, Op. Cit.*, p. 152

notion of person must take into account the pre-existing spiritual element of the individual, what he calls “personal spirit” (*Chi* of the Igbo, *Ori* of the Yoruba, *Kra* or *Okra* of the Asante, *Se* of Adja-Fon, *Aklama* or *Kla* of the Ewe peoples respectively).<sup>102</sup> Uzukwu holds that among the Igbos the “personal spirit” (or *Chi*) has a dynamic relationship to “individual destiny, and to the ‘returning’ dead, and to God himself.”<sup>103</sup> In his view, this personal spirit, determines the course of one’s path in life (among the Fon), personal wellbeing, and even personal character (among the Ewe).<sup>104</sup> It would be helpful to quote him at some length:

The above fundamental spiritual linkage from pre-existence illustrates a key molding block for apprehending the human person in West Africa. The Spirit dimension of the person linking the individual from pre-existence into life in this world is strategic to the notion of person. The spirit carries or reflects individual destiny providentially assigned by God. It constitutes the acknowledged and unacknowledged link with God in the evolving destiny of the individual or in questions asked about fortunes and misfortunes by the individual and community. One should not underestimate the cosmological and anthropological position of this structural determinant of destiny, embedded spirit, the original gift and guardian from God that humanizes the person.<sup>105</sup>

Uzukwu’s insistence on the centrality of “duality” (or “multiplicity”) as an interpretive paradigm is squarely in line with Chinua Achebe’s view that the physical world has its “double and counterpart” or mirror image in the world of spirits.<sup>106</sup> Achebe affirms that “every person has a personal *chi* who created him...a person’s fortunes in life are controlled more or less completely

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<sup>102</sup> Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness, Op. Cit.* p. 153

<sup>103</sup> E.E. Uzukwu, *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness, ibid.* p.152 Chinua Achebe argues that “we may visualize a person’s *chi* as his other identity in spirit-land – his *spirit being* complementing his terrestrial human being; for nothing can stand alone, there must always be another thing standing beside it.” See Chinua Achebe, “Chi in Igbo Cosmology,” in *Morning yet on Creation Day* (London: Heinemann, 1975), p. 93

<sup>104</sup> Uzukwu, *ibid.* p. 153

<sup>105</sup> Uzukwu, *ibid.* p. 154

<sup>106</sup> Chinua Achebe, “Chi in Igbo Cosmology,” p. 94

by his *chi*.”<sup>107</sup> He claims that for the Igbos, one’s gifts and talents, and even character are all “received” before one comes to birth. His “chi” bargains for him at the time.<sup>108</sup> It is noteworthy that “chi” is not just a personal deity, but actually the “unique” creator of an equally unique individual! Achebe points out that such *radical individuality* among the Igbo finds a counterbalance (its “double”) only in another “potent force – the will of his community;”<sup>109</sup> for according to him, no person is above the will of his community. Igbo people capture this idea with a proverb: *isụọrọ ọha nri, ọha erichaa ya, mana ọha sụọrọ gi nri, igaghị erichaliya* (if you, as an individual, cook for the community, the community will finish it, but if the community cooks for you, you cannot finish it). In other words, as Achebe explains, “No man however great can win a judgment against all the people” [the community].<sup>110</sup>

Apart from the above, Uzukwu also identifies eight other dimensions relevant to the West African notion of person: According to him, among the Bambara of Mali and Asante of Ghana there are eight and seven principles respectively that converge to make up a person: *mogya* (blood); *okra* (guardian spirit); *sunsum* (individualizing principle in a person, is spiritual and pre-existent); *honhon* (person’s shadow); *sasa* (an ethical component or conscience); *ntoro* (spiritual

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<sup>107</sup> Achebe, *ibid.* p.98 Christopher S. Nwodo explains further in his reflections on Achebe’s work that “Chi in Igbo thought is a spirit, a spiritual, non-human complement to the human person. It involves also the ultimate explanation of the totality of Igbo universe, constituting at the same time the basis of Igbo ontology in that strict sense of the philosophy of being or existence from which proceed Igbo religion, psychology and general attitude to life.” See Christopher S. Nwodo, *Philosophical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe* (Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press, 2004) pp. 242-3. Achebe however concedes in the same page above (p. 98) that there are many minor and sometimes major divergences of opinions regarding this notion of “chi” among different Igbo communities. See also Christopher S. Nwodo, *Philosophical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe, Loc. Cit.*, pp. 247-250

<sup>108</sup> Chinua Achebe, “Chi in Igbo Cosmology,” p. 97

<sup>109</sup> Chinua Achebe, “Chi in Igbo Cosmology,” p. 99 Achebe points out on this page the inherent duality in Igbo cosmology by adding using a common Igbo proverb that explains this: (“wherever something stands, no matter what, another something stands beside it” (*ife kwulu, ife akwudebe ya*))

<sup>110</sup> Achebe, “Chi in Igbo Cosmology, *ibid.* p. 99

component inherited from father but discarded after puberty as one “reaches socially defined maturity” and gains personal *ntoro*); and *saman* (the form one takes after death).<sup>111</sup> Is there a rational basis for the above claim? Uzuoku answers in the affirmative. He argues that a “body” (the visible aspect), “breath” (not sensible breath but an equivalent of *pneuma* or *spiritus*), and “shadow” (as soul or *anima/psyche*) distinction provides some clarity in conceptualizing a person in West Africa.<sup>112</sup> In this regard, he probably agrees with Gyekye who also distinguishes *Okra* (soul), *honam* (body), and *sunsum* (spirit) in conceptualizing person among the Akan.

It is then possible to argue that Uzuoku is as close to the Western model (the ontological model) of personhood as Gyekye whose Akan view of personhood stresses the ontological individuality of the person and for that reason places Uzuoku further away from Mentiki’s claims which Gyekye critiques as “radical communitarianism” that attempts to domesticate the individual.<sup>113</sup> The same argument holds true for the Igbo who are known for their characteristic individualism to such a degree that they have no serious allegiance to kings (*Igbo ama Eze*) as we find in other tribes in Nigeria like the Yoruba or Hausa. However, as we see from Achebe’s view above, this individualism is moderated by a higher force – “the will of the community”. It is our opinion then that there is a *necessary tension* (hopefully a healthy one) among the Igbo for both *individualism* and *community*. Gyekye shares this view in articulating Akan view of person.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> E.E. Uzuoku, *God, Spirits, and Human Wholeness*, *ibid*, p. 154

<sup>112</sup> E. E. Uzuoku, *ibid*, p. 157

<sup>113</sup> Kwame Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 56 cited by P. Ikuonobe, *Philosophical Perspectives*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 76

<sup>114</sup> See Gyekye, “Person and Community in African Thought,” *Loc. Cit.*, p. 106-113

In his critique of Menkiti, he has this to say:

A consideration of other aspects of human nature would certainly be appropriate: a person is by nature a social (communal) being, yes; but he is by nature other things as well (i.e. he possesses other essential attributes). Failure to recognize this may result in pushing the significance and implications of a person's communal nature beyond their limits, an act that would in turn result in investing the community with an all-engulfing moral authority to determine all things about the life of the individual person. One might thus easily succumb to the temptation of exaggerating the normative status and power of the cultural community in relation to those of the person, and thus obfuscating our understanding [of] the real nature of the person. It seems to me that Menkiti succumbed to this temptation.<sup>115</sup>

We agree completely with Gyekye's point of view above that Menkiti's view upon which the normative model of personhood is based is in need of evaluation. However, given that this view is held by many, it is important to keep this in view as their perception of the reality of African experience. There is yet no need for absolute positions, at least not yet. It is possible that Menkiti expresses correctly a reality for some African cultures, and Gyekye is doing same for another. We do not think there is a homogenous view of personhood that would adequately describe the experience of all Africans at all times in all cultures. However, if Menkiti is describing the Igbo view of personhood, Uzukwu and Achebe's will disagree given the "radical individualism" of the Igbo person that they pointed out above and to which this writer confirms to be true.

The foregoing therefore underscores the complexity of the African phenomena. Is it possible to make a universal claim that is relevant for most African peoples, even if not in absolute terms? We cannot answer in the affirmative until perhaps a critical mass of systematized analysis reveal the commonalities in what presently seem either divergent or incompatible positions. There is an obvious difficulty in explaining the rationality of a dualistic worldview to one not socialized in it. The idea of a "spirit-double" is a problematic for self-identity to a

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<sup>115</sup> Gyekye, *Person and Community in African Thought*, Op. Cit., p. 106

western mind, but perhaps adopting in its place the concept of “guardian angel”<sup>116</sup> might reveal the concept as a deeper ontological reality that different cultures prefer to interpret differently. At this pioneering stage in articulating this reality in Africa, it might sound too complex and ridiculous but definitely not meaningless. Therefore, the age-old difficulty in the West with the philosophical question of body-soul or mind-matter *dualism* will invariably replay itself in Africa as authors like Achebe or Uzukwu grapple with describing a phenomenon that reveals itself in a dualistic garb.<sup>117</sup> If you are an Igbo or Akan person, you will know *intuitively* that some of these authors (Achebe, Uzukwu, Gyekye, and Menkiti) are firstly *describing* a phenomenon and only secondarily *reflecting* on it. If the description aspect is wrong, you will know intuitively that their conclusions will be equally wrong. Hence, the inherent ambiguity in a dualistic view of personal identity is one that will continue to generate debate for a long time in Africa especially as more of the scholars are socialized in a different cultural setting other than Africa.

We could also argue that it is self-contradictory to claim and deny the same thing at once. It is in this respect that holding “chi” as both a *personal double* that implies “creature” (but existing in another realm) and unique *creator*, implying immortality, seem to be self-contradictory. But again, Western Christian idea of creation in genesis is hinged on the idea of *imago Dei* which gives a religious interpretation to an ontological reality identified by an earlier

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<sup>116</sup> See Christopher S. Nwodo, *Philosophical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe* (Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press, 2004), p. 246

<sup>117</sup> We take cognizance of Christopher S. Nwodo’s commentary on this point and particularly on duality. He argues that “duality is not philosophical dualism implying an opposition” but a “complementary principle” that is an “antidote to absolutism and all forms of extremism” of any kind. Positively, it is about “fluidity, flow, and flexibility” or “resilience” that enables it to reconcile seemingly contradictory viewpoints and reject all domineering stance that tend to impose itself on anyone or suffocate individual or communal freedom. See C. S. Nwodo, *Philosophical Perspectives, Op. Cit.*, pp. 243, 247, 253-4. In the end, it does sound like a native grown libertarianism practiced long before the words were coined.



pagan culture as “soul” and/or “spirit” in the constitution of any human being. African philosophy is now confronted with interpreting the same aboriginal or primal ontological reality on their terms.<sup>118</sup>

For this research however, the role of “Chi” (and its equivalents in other African cultures that share the same view) as giver of “character” constitutes a major problematic for our discourse if not clarified. The primary moral question here is whether “Chi” is *responsible* for how people behave? If yes, then there will be no need for us to continue with this research. Does Achebe’s explanation clarify this point? In his explanation on having a “bad Chi” he argues:

We must remember, however, when we hear that a man has a bad *chi* that we are talking about his fortune rather than his character. A man of impeccable character may yet have a bad *chi* so that nothing he puts his hand to will work out right. *Chi* is therefore more concerned with success or failure than with righteousness and wickedness.<sup>119</sup>

Christopher S. Nwodo expounds further that “chi” as “divine providence” and giver of gifts, is viewed as “fundamentally good and just.”<sup>120</sup> According to Nwodo, Chi “demands” uprightness, moral integrity, humility, and other virtues from its ward. As such it is often represented in folklore as an embodiment of “courage, resilience, hard work, and prudence.”<sup>121</sup> It is on this account that Nwodo concludes that “Chi in Igbo cosmology performs the function of destiny.”<sup>122</sup>

Nwodo argues on the same page that *Chi* is an “enforcer” of the contractual agreement the proto- individual signed into before being created. Hence, life situations are explained as

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<sup>118</sup> Christopher S. Nwodo used “primordial exposure to Being” in his analysis of Heidegger’s use of it to explain people’s initial encounter with reality. See Nwodo, *Philosophical Perspectives*, p. 240

<sup>119</sup> Chinua Achebe, “Chi In Igbo Cosmology,” p. 97

<sup>120</sup> Nwodo, *Philosophical Perspectives*, p. 259

<sup>121</sup> Nwodo, *Philosophical Perspectives*, P. 260

<sup>122</sup> Nwodo, *Ibid.* p. 267

either fruits or consequences of that agreement or in the case of hardship as punishment for derailing from it. In this regard, we wonder if it is not coherent to suggest that “chi” could actually be a *cultural metaphor (or myth)* evolved for interpreting or making sense of conflicting life puzzles or difficult life situations often lumped together in the West under the category of “fate”? If this is the case, the different versions of *determinism* considered in this chapter do show it remains an ongoing philosophical problem even in the West. However, it still does not explain the original claim that “chi is giver of character” except this is understood in terms of being an “enforcer” (like an *internal source* of moral sanctions) in which case, it operates like conscience. Could it then be that “chi” is actually individual conscience in a deified form? Perhaps this is worth exploring in another project!

The foregoing reinforces the view that there is no absolute consensus on the idea of personhood in Africa. But there is sufficient evidence for both the ontological and normative models which may actually coalesce into one objective model overtime as the ambiguities are gradually clarified. However, the normative view of personhood, barring the critique noted above, remain the stronger or *older* view in African scholarship on this topic. It insists that one is recognized as a person *if and only if* he/she meets the socio-moral standards of the moral community.<sup>123</sup> If this holds true, does this imply that before this, one is a “non-person?” It is implied. Some statements among the Igbo that suggest this non-person status are: *onyé-éfuléfu* (a

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<sup>123</sup> There are obvious nuances as to how each ethnic group in Africa conceptualizes “person” in its specifics. For example, Segun Gbadegesin provides a detailed analysis on the concept of person among the Yoruba of Nigeria that identifies “*eniyán*” as the term for “person” but having other material and spiritual attributes: *ara, okan, emi, and ori*. He evaluates the similarities and differences between Yoruba (Nigeria) concept of person with that of Akan (Ghana) conceptual scheme. Despite the differences, there is a discernible pattern of conceptualizing personhood with socio-moral bias. See S. Gbadegesin, *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), pp. 27-47.

“useless individual”) or *Obu madu?* (“Is he/she a human being?”). These are used as forms of sarcasm – words used to denigrate whoever it refers to – and often they are reserved for social deviants and people of low morals or achievement: loafers, trouble makers, womanizers (or the sexually promiscuous), and for those who have a habit of stealing. Stealing is a very serious social vice among the Igbos such that in some communities known thieves were made to “vanish” (*ifuo*) from the community.

It is debatable whether the above characterizations are sufficient evidence of “non-person” status among the Igbos. It is far from convincing, and would therefore need further study. However, there is a strong claim among African scholars<sup>124</sup> like Menkiti that personhood is a form of social status conferred on “good character” rather than a quality one possesses necessarily by virtue of being human. Menkiti insists that this concept of “person” is organismic and developmental. It means that for an African, a person is a social organism that evolves to ‘selfhood’ through a process of social integration.<sup>125</sup> It is then inconceivable, according to this view, to define or understand a person outside the nexus of community.

The further implication of the normative model of personhood is that morality is also socially defined. Morally good actions are those that promote the good of the community. Morality focuses on “duty, responsibility, and obligations”<sup>126</sup> one owe the community as criteria

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<sup>124</sup> Gyekye in his critique against Menkiti’s position provides a plethora of views of African scholars who share the same views with Menkiti. He argues, inter alia, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkuruma, Leopold Senghor, among others all fought for independence for their countries and sees in Socialism a deep link to African community experience. Therefore, they propounded views of African communalism that would support giving priority to the community rather than the individual. See, Kwame Gyekye, “Person and Community in African Thought,” in *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies*, I (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992), P. 101-122

<sup>125</sup> Menkiti, “Person and Community in African Traditional Thought,” *Ibid.* p. 172.

<sup>126</sup> Ikuenobe, *ibid*

for the community to fulfill its obligation to the individual. This African view implies priority is given to the community over the individual, taking note of objections to this view above.

A critical question regarding individual identity and the possibility of moral freedom has been raised given the close relationship between individuals and community in Africa. Bujo and Mekiti, among others, affirm such identity and freedom. They argue that Africans have unique and elaborate rituals of naming that are traditional modes of differentiation and identity formation embedded in custom and socialization process. This position has both oppositions and support depending on where you look for answers in most traditional societies other than Africa where similar views subsist.<sup>127</sup> The individual and community are mutually complementary. However, the individual cannot exist without the community; rather, it is the community that makes the individual's self-realization possible. The individual can be sacrificed for the community but not vice versa even if one upholds mutuality of relation between the two as we see in Gyekye and Uzukwu above. An individual cannot achieve an ethical ideal outside of the community as a "personal achievement" like you might have in western modes of thinking. The individual and community are so deeply related even though they maintain their distinct identities. This will be further explored in chapters 3-5.

Selznick's caveat that we avoid subsuming the individual in either a *collectivity* or *process* warrants attention. We will address that in the context that African view of personhood

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<sup>127</sup> Scholars have held views that suggest individuality is not about "individual" but a "collective individuality". Here it is argued that there is no place for individuals being specifically individuated because all are open to the other for realization. See Robert Foster, (ed.) *Nation Making: Emergent Identities in Post-Colonial Melanesia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995); Thomas Mashio, *To Remember the Faces of the Dead: Plenitude of Memory in Southwestern New Britain*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994.

has raised: the relationship between personhood and moral responsibility within a community of agents. In other words, what does it mean to be a *socially* responsible person? It is reasonable to deduce from the foregoing that “personhood” confers self-identity to an individual in that sense in which a specific culture (rather than geographical location) confers identity to a given community.

The notion of personhood we uphold in this research is one that seeks *homogeneity of self*. It implies a basic harmony exists between the powers of the soul (of cognition, willing, and desires) and of one’s subjective experiences that involve the use of these powers. It is this basic harmonious ordering that is essential in distinguishing a person as an autonomous whole from another in much the same way we distinguish any being (as an existing unit) from another. It is the basis for holding individuals responsible for their actions. Someone suffering from a *bipolar disorder* could often escape culpability for his/her actions. A splintered self has no locus of identity as is captured in psychiatry when speaking of “split personality” as a *disorder* within the *self* as such. The “integrity” of actions emanating from the self helps determine how responsible this “self” is; and from an African perspective, determine if he is indeed a “person” or simply a *self* still in search of an identity – in search of personhood. We therefore cannot uphold “inconsistency” as a normal parameter for personhood because it would help only to distort rather than determine identity.

However, it is important to note that it is not established that a dualistic conception of personhood as we find in Achebe and Uzukwu, among others, has anything to do with, or fulfills

in anyway the criteria for multiple personality disorder.<sup>128</sup> The difference is that a dualistic conceptualization of personhood, as seen above, adopts a different frame of reference to characterize a person. Its duality is a method or a way of seeing the world and therefore equally concerned about *wholeness* or a way of ensuring a more *holistic vision of reality*. Therefore it has its own criteria for identifying a “divided self” which is merely a language that captures the reality of a thoroughly unhealthy personality.

We are then obviously cautious with views like Erving Goffman’s that conceives the self as a plurality determined by the social conditions exerting influence on the individual at the time.<sup>129</sup> He conceives the self as elusive, ever taking the face of shifting interests and interactions in relation with other selves. The problem with this notion of self/personhood is that it not only twats any attempt to articulate the notion of moral responsibility and/or personal integrity but also prevents a proper appreciation of human freedom given the external mechanisms of social controls that exerts enormous influence on the individual to which he responds by constant face-

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<sup>128</sup> Multiple personality disorder is a “very rare psychological disorder in which a person has two or more [from 3-13 or more] distinct personalities, each with its own thoughts, feelings, and patterns of behavior. The personalities often are direct opposites and dominate at different times, with abrupt transitions triggered by distressful events or memories. Each may be entirely unaware of the other but aware of unexplained gaps in remembered time. In Psychiatry, the condition is known as dissociative identity disorder. The term “split personality,” denoting “Schizophrenia” refers to an unrelated disorder in which the split (separation) is between thought and feeling.” See, *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed. (Columbia University Press, 2013), s.v. "Multiple Personality," <http://www.questia.com/read/1E1-multipers>. And further, “schizophrenia (skĭt’səfrē’nēə), group of severe mental disorders characterized by reality distortions resulting in unusual thought patterns and behaviors. Because there is often little or no logical relationship between the thoughts and feelings of a person with schizophrenia, the disorder has often been called ‘split personality.’ However, the condition should not be confused with multiple personality, a disorder in which the individual has two or more distinct personalities that dominate at different times.” Culled from *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed. (Columbia University Press, 2013), s.v. 'Schizophrenia,' <http://www.questia.com/read/1E1-schizoph>. (Encyclopedia 2013)

<sup>129</sup> Erving Goffman, *Assylums* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), cited by Philip Selznick, *ibid*, p 221. He uses the metaphor of “drama” to explain how individuals are ever maneuvering to save face in the light of prevailing social situations such that there is a plurality of selves, episodic and ever shifting. The face we wear at a given time depends on the mechanisms of social control and personal influences existing at the time.

saving manipulations or defensive mechanisms. While this view might be descriptive of a part of reality or human sociality where people constantly try to “be in control” of some aspect of the forces of social arrangement and make sense of their lives, however, it is important to underscore the fact that it is precisely how we do this that we reveal our moral worth: whether we have moral integrity or not and thereby determine how socially responsible we are. It is not conceptually coherent to speak of social responsibility without a sense of an acting self as an integral moral unit. Let us now examine further the relationship between personhood and moral and/or social responsibility.

#### **1.4 Personhood: Morality and Social Responsibility**

In this segment, our concern is to establish what it means to be a morally and socially responsible person. From the foregoing we see that moral responsibility cannot be properly conceived except in relation to other moral agents. In other words, moral responsibility is meaningful only when we speak of our relation to other “persons” within a community of agents. Common sense informs us that being morally responsible is a critical criterion for participating in the life and development of any human community. It is presumed to be the very soul of developing a social self. How we come to develop the capacity and/or awareness that we have a responsibility to others in the community will be explored in the next segment. These “others” with whom we live in community are the very reasons we develop and cultivate life-long “other-regarding-attitudes” for peaceful co-existence. So the *need for community* is at the heart of moral responsibility. We are expected or *socialized* to cultivate “other-regarding-attitudes” for only in so doing are we arguably able to live relatively meaningful and self-fulfilling lives. In other words, it is in the context of cultivating “other-regarding attitudes” we are able to cultivate

appropriately (by putting in check) “self-regarding attitudes.” A corollary position is that we are able to cognitively come to true consciousness of self in the “presence” of another. It is only in the presence of another that we evoke the capacity to be our best or worst selves. The need for moral responsibility is evoked not properly in relation to other animals but precisely in the presence of other selves (those like us). It is this reason that explains the disproportion in moral responsibility once “being like us” is questioned in the relationship. We shall return to this.

**Martin Buber’s** insight, following Mead, is that the “self” becomes conscious of itself only in relation to the “Other” and defines the “I” and “thou” relationship as integral to the development of selfhood.<sup>130</sup> **Paul Ricoeur** made a more extensive study in the phenomenology of self, drawing insights from Aristotle, Kant, Heidegger and I. Levinas, came to the same conclusions except that he insists that actions of the self are primarily directed at some good. The ultimate aim is to participate in “good life’ with and for others in just institutions.”<sup>131</sup> He therefore conceives ethics as prior to morals (norms), adopting the insight of Immanuel Levinas. But unlike Levinas he makes it clear that the notion of “other” goes beyond the mere face-to-face personal encounters or relationship to encompass institutions – a community of beings.<sup>132</sup> This

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<sup>130</sup> The *I and Thou* relationship is considered by some to have ushered in “a Copernican revolution in theology...” but also criticized for reductionism – compressing basic human relationships to merely two: I-thou and I-it. For these see Bloch, 1983, p.42; Walter Kaufmann, 1983, pp.28-33 cited by Michael Zank in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “Martin Buber,” Online edition, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2009/entries/buber>

<sup>131</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans by Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 189, 262.

<sup>132</sup> Hannah Arendt’s concept of power helps Ricoeur argue that this primacy of relationship aimed at the good life (ethics) over constraints of juridical and political systems is stressed when we “mark the gap separating *power in common* and *domination*.” See Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, *Ibid.* p. 194. Furthermore, Hannah Arendt asserts that “Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together.” See H. Arendt, *Crisis of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), P. 143.



implies that socio-moral responsibility is determined by institutional relationships - relationships within a community. **Immanuel Levinas** himself argues in his “metaphysics of desire” that the moral law is specifically “revealed” in the “face of the other,”<sup>133</sup> that is, the concrete person before you. He argues:

To begin with the face as a source from which all meaning appears, the face in its absolute nudity... is to affirm that being is enacted in the relation between men that Desire rather than need commands acts. Desire, an aspiration that does not proceed from a lack—metaphysics—is the desire of a person.<sup>134</sup>

While the view above is about the foundations of morals, it does imply that the moral law obliging one to responsibility is inconceivable except in relation to other persons. In the aboriginal encounter with other persons, the natural instinct to “murder” has a counter weight in the plea “on the face of the other” for love. This is perhaps the original root of the moral sense to “be responsible” we shall examine in the next segment of this chapter. Suffice it to affirm at the moment that this view is even more acutely accentuated in African view of morality.

We have seen earlier how the African concept of person is meaningless outside the community; but the foregoing also indicates that this is not uniquely an African phenomenon. However, in Africa, *relationships* are central in understanding morality in all its dimensions. John Mbiti’s assertion that “I am because we are...” (noted above) is further elucidated by I.A Menkiti: “The We is not an additive ‘we’ but a thoroughly fused collective ‘we’”<sup>135</sup> Therefore the imperative to *social responsibility* to an African mind is not merely because it is “expected”

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<sup>133</sup> Immanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 299.

<sup>134</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p.299

<sup>135</sup> I.A. Menkiti, “Person and Community in African Thought,” p. 166

of him/her but rather, because “it is him or her.”<sup>136</sup> This implies that the African view of social responsibility is integral to selfhood. L. Magesa, among others, argues likewise that “building social relationships” that promote life is the imperative of African religion and the core of moral responsibility.<sup>137</sup> We have already indicated that the notion of moral and/or social responsibility is identical, that is, not strictly differentiated. K. A. Opoku even punctuates this point by saying: “Life is when you are together, alone you are an animal.”<sup>138</sup> It is in relation with others that the need to live responsibly arises; otherwise, we are prone to live out our most basic instincts like animals. It is then plausible to maintain that the concept of moral and social responsibility are more fused than delineated to an African mind than you might find in the West. Let us now consider an overview

A normative concept that nearly approximates moral responsibility among the Bantu speaking regions of Africa is “Ubuntu” (more specifically so among the Xhosa). Ubuntu is an approximation because it is difficult to render an exact English equivalent of it and its variations; hence there are different renderings of it among the different Bantu dialects and among scholars.<sup>139</sup> **Thaddeus Metz** who develops a more lucid theory of this concept says that

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<sup>136</sup> H. Verhoef and C. Michel, “Studying Morality within the African Context: A Model of Moral Analysis and Construction,” in *Journal of Moral Education*, Vol. 26 (4):1997, p. 396.

<sup>137</sup> Laurent Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Tradition of Abundant Life* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis books, 1997).

<sup>138</sup> He cites P. Bock, “Exploring African Morality,” *Cross Currents*, XXVIII:4 (Winter, 1978-9), p.483.

<sup>139</sup> We acknowledge the variations of this concept as identified by Richard Tambulasi and Happy Kayuni who noted: “Like many doctrines that characterize a way of living of communities with small but crucial cultural variations, *ubuntu* is a difficult concept to pin down as different communities attach different meanings to the concept emphasizing the strengths of some aspects they regard fundamental. Moreover, *ubuntu* is referred to differently in different African Bantu languages. For instance, it is *umunthu* in Chewa, *umundu* in Yawo, *bunhu* in Tsonga, *unhu* in Shona, *botho* in Sotho or Tswana, *umuntu* in Zulu, *vhutu* in Venda, and *ubuntu* in Xhosa and Ndebele. In addition, being an African concept and a basis for African cultural abstract feeling, attempts to create concrete definitions of the term prove futile. At the bottom level however, *ubuntu* is the underlying foundation of African

“roughly, it means humanness, and it often figures into the maxim that “a person is a person through other persons.” This implies that one’s metaphysical and social identity “depends on the community.”<sup>140</sup> Desmond Tutu provides us further insight to understanding this term as integral to the relationship between personhood, moral responsibility, and community:

When we want to give high praise to someone we say, “Yu, u nobuntu”; “Hey, so-and-so has *Ubuntu*.” Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, “My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up in yours.”<sup>141</sup>

The concept of *Ubuntu* is difficult for a Westerner to understand but very much at home with any African. Michael Battle concedes this much in the title he dedicates to this African concept:

*Ubuntu* is an African concept of personhood in which the identity of the self is understood to be formed interdependently through community. This is a difficult world-view for many Westerners who tend to understand self as over and against others— or as in competition with others. In a Western worldview, interdependence may be easily confused with codependence, a pathological condition in which people share a dependence on something that is not life-giving, such as alcohol or drugs. *Ubuntu*, however, is about symbiotic and cooperative relationships— neither the

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communities’ culture. It is a way of life that characterizes the communal nature of African communities as it “brings to the fore images of supportiveness, cooperation and communism” (Koster 1996: 111). Nussbaum (2003: 2) conceptualizes it as the “capacity in African culture to express companion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony and humanity in the interest of building and maintaining community with justice and mutual caring”. ”See, “Can African Feet Divorce Western Shoes? The Case of ‘Ubuntu’ and Democratic Good Governance in Malawi, in *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 14(2): 147-151 (2005), p. 148; See also Michael Battle who adds, “The word Ubuntu comes from a linguistic group of Sub-Saharan languages known as Bantu. Both words Ubuntu and Bantu can be recognized by the common root of -ntu (human). The prefix ba- denotes the plural form for humanity. In short, “Ubuntu” means personhood. A further etymological foundation for -ntu can be translated as being, that is, human being. In the spirituality common to Sub-Saharan Africa, there is a direct relationship between human being and God’s being. Ubuntu, therefore, also includes a theological understanding in which all beings are known through the category of personhood. Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* (Kindle Locations 62-64), Seabury Books, Kindle Edition.

<sup>140</sup> Thaddeus Metz, “Toward an African Moral Theory,” *Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol.15 (3):2007, p. 323.

<sup>141</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (New York: Random House, 1999), p. 31.

parasitic and destructive relationships of codependence nor the draining and alienating relationships of competition.<sup>142</sup>

Space does not allow us explore further the different dimensions of African view of either hospitality or solidarity (friendship) that could reveal the linkages with and enrich at a deeper level an understanding of this concept.<sup>143</sup> However, we prefer to argue from the foregoing explanation that *Ubuntu* is a term that encapsulates the different qualities that is essential to being considered a “responsible person”. It means that when someone is said to have Ubuntu, it means he/she is morally responsible. To an African mind, moral responsibility is about building positive and enduring relationships with others. It implies being genuinely concerned about what is happening in the other person’s life. It is about empathy, care, hospitality, benevolence, love. At the heart of all these is “relationship” – the good relationship we share with others. It therefore affirms our positions that “relationship” is at the heart of all moral conceptualizations among Africans. The goal of morality is to maintain the harmony of the network of relationships at all costs. And this relationship transcends person-to-person and community to include all creation (ancestors, spirits, the cosmos).

While *Ubuntu* is a concept undergoing development, it does help in some way to conceptualize a specifically African notion of what “moral responsibility” implies to an African mind. It allows us to see moral responsibility as meaningful only in the context of *relationships* with others within the concrete moral community. Though T. Metz’s analysis explains how this concept approximates different Western themes of right and wrong conduct but we leave this

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<sup>142</sup> Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* (New York: Seabury Books, 2009) Kindle Edition, Locations 53-55

<sup>143</sup> See Gregory I. Olikenyi, *African Hospitality: A Model for the Communication of the Gospel in the African Cultural Context* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 2001), pp. 102-133.

aspect for another chapter. Suffice to say here though that this African notion of moral responsibility as we interpreted above fits neatly into Strawson's "fellow feeling" argument and Niebuhr's idea of moral responsibility that presupposes the idea of a moral community. We do recognize the distinctions properly made between community and society.<sup>144</sup> We shall explore this further in Chapter three when we develop fully the idea of community. At the moment, let us review the current debate on the origins of moral responsibility.

### 1.5 Nature or Nurture: The Origins of Moral Responsibility

In the light of our explication of the notion of moral responsibility, is it safe to assert that we cannot possibly expect responsible action from individuals in a moral community where others (especially its leaders) act irresponsibly towards them "consistently"?<sup>145</sup> Rick Nauert recently posed the question: "Are some corporate CEOs, lawyers, politicians and scientists psychopaths? And his response is "yes" if we widen our understanding of psychopaths to include very intelligent and often charismatic personalities that "*display a chronic inability to feel guilt, remorse or anxiety about any of their actions.*"<sup>146</sup> We know the rage such coldness in the face

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<sup>144</sup> See Wojtyla, *Op. Cit.* pp. 239; Ferdinand Tonnies, *Community and Society*, trans. Charles P. Loomis (1887 reprint, New York: Dever Publications, inc., 2002), pp. 33-102. Tonnies presents here what has become a classical distinction between "Gemeinschaft" (community) and "Gesellschaft" (society). He asserts that "Gemeinschaft" connotes not just a certain kinship or intimacy but perhaps even more important is the "moral unity" that sustains and upholds such intimacy and a sense of rootedness or kinship they share in common. It is this moral unity that we claim to be at the heart of the commitment that they express through mutual solidarity despite all factors that threaten to separate them. It is this internal cohesion (moral unity) that explains why social practices, beliefs, and institutions are considered as intrinsically good and valued for themselves.

<sup>145</sup> The possible explanation is that we have become deluded by an excessive focus on the view of humans as "citizens" who obey laws or as "builders" who seek for ends. Hence we believe that the social contract holds so long as we "enforce" laws and provide limited services that constitute human "ends". The unfortunate truth however is that we cannot legislate our way to moral responsibility. It needs deliberation rather than coercion for it to be authentic.

<sup>146</sup> Rick Nauert wrote an article published in *Psych Central*. See "A better definition of Psychopath," Retrieved on December 5, 2011, from <http://psychcentral.com/news/2006/07/03/improving-the-definition-of-%e2%80%98psychopath%e2%80%99/64.html>

of a horrible act evokes in the beholders. If “chronic inability to feel guilt or remorse” regarding one’s actions is what distinguishes psychopaths from normal people, it might be justified to label most of our leaders who exhibit these attitudes psychopaths. But how does labeling help us to deal with the dilemma of moral irresponsibility? Obviously finding the roots of psychopathy would form a critical core of the solution based on the assumption that those who “display chronic inability to feel guilt and remorse” are more prone to act irresponsibly. This agrees with our understanding of moral responsibility thus far as having more to do with “*kin feelings*” than thinking as such.

Following up on Nauerts claim, we found out that the science of psychology have clinically classified “psychopaths” as basically “maladjustments” in the developmental process that result in “impairment” of the cognitive apparatus within the individual.<sup>147</sup> Does this answer the puzzle? Not in the least because irresponsible behaviors traceable to psychopaths are infinitesimally small when compared to the whole. Moreover, the same psychology admits that the “origins of psychopathy are still unknown.”<sup>148</sup> However, they admit that this impairment is traceable physiologically to specific neurotransmitter systems in the brain but cannot claim their origin is either genetic or environmental.<sup>149</sup> Neuroscientists have also claimed that “acquired lesions in the prefrontal cortex” could explain amoral behavior and critics point to the degree as

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<sup>147</sup> Bert Musschenga, “Moral Violations and the Ordinary Moral Person,” in *The Development and Structure of Conscience*, Willem Koops, et al, eds. (New York: Psychology Press, 2010), p. 36.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.* Robert Hare provides an extensive psychological characterization of psychopaths but with critical stress on emotional impairment. See R. D. Hare, *Without Conscience: The disturbing world of the psychopaths among us*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993); J. Blair, D. Mitchell, & K. Blair, *The Psychopath: Emotion and the Brain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 14ff.

<sup>149</sup> J. Blair, D. Mitchell, & K. Blair, *The Psychopath: Emotion and the Brain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 13ff.

depending on when it occurred.<sup>150</sup> While abnormal growth could explain amoral behavior in clinical patients it still does not explain amoral or immoral tendencies in well-formed persons (people without “acquired lesions in the prefrontal cortex”). What they tried to explain though is the phenomenon of “insufficient self-control” or “self-regulation.” This is evidently a new attempt to answer the age old question of moral irresponsibility: the recourse to the “weakness of the will” argument that we saw in Aristotle above.

Despite the foregoing shortcomings, we think psychopaths afford us *some clue* in understanding moral irresponsibility. That “clue” is reposed in the symptoms: “a *chronic inability to feel guilt or remorse.*” R. D Hare puts it even more directly when he asserts that “Their hallmark is a stunning lack of conscience”.<sup>151</sup> According to him, the psychopath profile is the “image of a self-centered, callous, and remorseless person profoundly lacking in empathy and the ability to form warm emotional relationships with others, a person who functions without the restraints of conscience.”<sup>152</sup> You may have guessed rightly that the reason we are exploring this route is precisely its connection with the notion of conscience. We are of the view that though we do not yet know the causes of psychopathy, it is reasonable to assume that diminishing the evident symptoms associated with it should result in more responsible behavior or at least diminish the degree of irresponsibility. Our greater concern however is not the treatment of psychopaths but rather in a related question: Would symptoms associated with

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<sup>150</sup> Antonio Damasio, *Descartes’ Error: Emotion, Reasons and the Human Brain*. New York: Avon Books, 1995.

<sup>151</sup> R. D. Hare, *Without Conscience, Ibid.* p. 6:

<sup>152</sup> Robert D. Hare, *Without Conscience*, p. 3.

psychopaths if found in less degree in “normal people” explain the degree to which such persons tend towards irresponsibility?

Strawson and Niebuhr would exclude psychopath from moral responsibility given that they lack the capacity to share fellow “feelings” of sympathy critical to social relationships that define responsibility. We need to explain how these “feelings” are related to conscience in the next chapter but it helps to note that some neuroscientists define psychopathic behavior in relation to its lack of reference to conscience. It is reasonable to hold therefore that when we “act without the restraints of conscience,” then the more irresponsible we would be expected to be. Kelly McAleer recently published the story of a neuroscientist (James Fallon) who discovered there is a visible difference in the scan imaging of psychopaths and non-psychopaths. He (Fallon) decided to scan his own brain and discovered his brain scan is identical to that of a psychopath. Further analysis of blood samples: MAO-A gene (monoamine oxidase A) controversially dubbed “warrior gene” due to its association with violent behavior. To his dismay, while his family members all have the low variant, his matches that of a born killer. But knowing that he is not a killer, his conclusion was that environmental factors (the fact that he had loving instead of an abusive childhood) ensured that the genetic predisposition to becoming a psychopath was “not activated”<sup>153</sup> in him. This is an important point in understanding the relation of nature and nurture in shaping behavior and who we become.<sup>154</sup> Critical here is the experience of empathy, love, and care in his childhood that helped him develop similar emotions that

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<sup>153</sup> Kelly McAleers, “The Effect of Nature and Nurture on Psychopathy: The of Case of James Fallon, *PsychCentral*. Retrieved on December 5, 2011, <http://blogs.psychcentral.com/forensic-focus/2010/07/the-effect-of-nature-nurture-on-psychopathy-the-case-of-james-fallon/>

<sup>154</sup> Howard H. Kendler has forcefully argued in this direction in *Amoral Thoughts About Morality: The Intersection of Science, Psychology, and Ethics* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas Publishers, 2008), pp. 61-68



checkmates the abnormal gene responsible for very violent behavior. Here “empathy” is an essential quality – providing trust for significant others involved in childhood relationships.

Perhaps the most recent significant development on the relationship between neuroscience and behavior is that of Paul J. Zak of the Center for *Neuro-economics Studies*. He claims to have identified “Oxytocin” as the “trust code” in the human DNA. He argues from the result of series of experiments that this hormone boosts trustworthiness, resulting in an increase in acts of generosity and empathy. He claims that those who have spikes in oxytocin without corresponding reaction (of trust and empathy) “suggest pathology” and or brain damage.<sup>155</sup> It is not our intention to argue against hard facts especially if it is proven with sustained evidence. So, supposing that Zak has struck on something substantive, what could be its possible implication for moral theory? What is the possible implication of a correlation between a specific hormone to a basic human sentiment like trust, empathy, or benevolence that we hitherto consider as the substratum of morally responsible acts? If it is possible to use artificial hormone to induce morally responsible acts, how does this impact moral theory and specifically our notion of conscience as the doorkeeper of morally responsible acts? To address these questions, we need to explore further the debate on the origins of morality especially that aspect of it regarding our genetic predisposition to selfishness which remains the moral albatross to moral responsibility.

#### 1.6 **The “Selfish Gene” and Altruism beyond Kin and Reciprocation**

Altruism beyond kin and reciprocation has often been affirmed as a distinguishing characteristic of human behavior traceable to earliest beginnings of the human project.

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<sup>155</sup> Paul J. Zak, “The Neurobiology of Trust,” in *Scientific American* (June, 2008), pp. 88-95

While “altruism” is a characteristic behavior of many biological organisms, it has never been established to go beyond kin and reciprocation as we find commonly among humans. To understand the argument we need to listen to evolution scientists. Evolutionary scientists especially in fields of neurobiology and evolutionary psychology insist that there is a “biological basis for all social behavior,”<sup>156</sup> and they have located this is what they call the “selfish genes”.<sup>157</sup> According to this view, selfishness is encoded in the genes of all biological organisms – including humans. They argue that selfishness is the “engine of evolution” because organisms that survive are essentially those whose genetic makeup best promotes the interest of that specific organism or group by its capacity to adapt to changing conditions thereby ensuring its survival and the replication of its kind. Socio-biologists like Richard Dawkins and E.O. Wilson, among others, maintain that altruism is a common phenomenon among animals and insects. Bees and birds have been recorded to commit suicide in a bid to protect their kind. Dawkins argue that altruistic behavior is a critical component of preservation in natural selection and hence is seen to evolve even in a very selfish world. He asserts:

Humans and Baboons evolved by natural selection...Anything that has evolved by natural selection should be selfish. Therefore, we must expect that when we go and look at the behavior of baboons, humans, and all other living creatures, we find it to be selfish.<sup>158</sup>

If selfishness and altruism are innate qualities in us, how we interpret their interaction makes a world of difference either setting us apart from the rest of biological life or destroying that

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<sup>156</sup> Thomas Jay Oord, “Morals, Love, and Relations in Evolutionary Theory,” in *Evolution and Ethics*, Philip Clayton and Jeffrey Schloss, eds. (Cambridge: William B. Erdmann Company, 2004), P.288.

<sup>157</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 1, 44-45, 182.

<sup>158</sup> Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, p. 4.

distinctiveness. Charles Darwin, the father of modern scientific evolution held four essential positions on the development of morality that remain foundational: He claimed, *inter alia*, that human morality evolved from: 1. Group selection, 2. Maintains that a yawning gap exists between human and animal moral systems. 3. The social instinct is primeval and basically the same in all modern humans. 4. The instinct for sympathy is the basis for moral development and the spread of improved social institutions.<sup>159</sup> In an effort to identify the most significant criteria for distinguishing humans and animals, he writes:

We have seen in the last two chapters that man bears in his bodily structure clear traces of his descent from lower form; but it may be urged that, as man differs greatly in his mental power from all other animals, there must be some error in this conclusion. No doubt the difference in this respect is enormous... The difference would, no doubt, still remain immense, even if one of the higher apes had been improved and civilized as much as a dog has been in comparison with its parent form, the wolf or jackal... *The moral sense perhaps affords the best highest distinction between man and lower animals.*<sup>160</sup>

While Darwin acknowledges an “enormous gap” existing between human and his closest cousins, some modern evolution scholars tend to discount this gap, preferring to fill them instead with spurious arguments. Chris Beard, a senior Paleontologist at Carnegie Museum made a recent breakthrough discovery of ancient fossils but was humble enough to admit that, “Every time a Paleontologist finds a fossil that fills an evolutionary gap, two more gaps of smaller magnitude are created that also need to be filled.”<sup>161</sup> The greater problem is not the facts

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<sup>159</sup> See Peter J. Richerson and Robert Boyd, “The Darwinian Evolutionary Ethics: Between Patriotism and Sympathy,” in *Evolution and Ethics*, Philip Clayton and Jeffrey Schloss, eds. (Cambridge: William B Eerdmans Company, 2004), p. 50.

<sup>160</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: American Home Library, 1874), pp. 94, 171 cited by Peter Richarson and Robert Boyd, “Darwinian Evolutionary Ethics,” *Ibid.* p. 53.

<sup>161</sup> Chris Beard, “Searching for Our Primate Ancestors in China, Carnegie Magazine, Online Edition: [http://www.carnegiemuseums.org/cmag/bk\\_isse/1996/marapr/beard.htm](http://www.carnegiemuseums.org/cmag/bk_isse/1996/marapr/beard.htm)

evolution scientists are dealing with but rather the conclusions they arrive at. Often such conclusions go beyond what the data says, resulting in a leap from a wholly descriptive explanation of “how” they think morality evolved to asserting “why” it exists.<sup>162</sup> So far they have not provided data evidence that clarifies the evolutionary gap but some would prefer to relegate morality and religion as “cultural delusions” lacking objectivity of truth.<sup>163</sup>

Loren Haarsma has argued that instead of philosophers and theologians trying to refute the often “conflicting”<sup>164</sup> claims of evolution scientists that are ahead of empirical data they work with, it is better to identify the locus of the problem. According to her, “the problem does not lie with the scientific claim but “in the philosophical, that if our moral and religious sentiment evolved, then moral and religious beliefs cannot have objective status or truth content.”<sup>165</sup> She holds firstly, that if the claims of evolution scientists are exorcised of certain “philosophical additions,” it will not be difficult reconciling them with Christian perspectives on morality.

Secondly, she insists on leaving a space for divine personal revelation at some point in the

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<sup>162</sup> See Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene, Op. Cit.*, p. 1. He also argued forcefully there is no teleology even in the evolution process in *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe without Design* (London: W.W. Norton, 1996).

<sup>163</sup> See Richard D. Alexander, “Biological Considerations in the Analysis of Morality,” in *Evolutionary Ethics*, ed. Matthew Nitechiki and Doris Nitechki (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 163-196; Michael Ruse and Edward O. Wilson, “The Approach of Sociobiology: The Evolution of Ethics,” in *Religion and Natural Sciences*, ed. James E. Huchigson (Forth Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993); Barth Voorzanger, “No Norms and No Nature – The Moral Relevance of Evolutionary Biology,” *Biology and Philosophy*, 2 (1987):253-70; Susan Blackmore, “The Meme’s Eye View,” in *Darwinizing Culture: The Status of Memetics as Science*, Ed. Robert Aunger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>164</sup> See Eva Jablonka and Marion J. Lamb, *Evolution in Four Dimensions: Genetic, Epigenetic, Behavioral, and Symbolic Variation in the History of Life* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), pp. 239-317. Their findings in molecular biology gave rise to a divergent approach to evolution that is non-DNA based.

<sup>165</sup> Loren Haarsma, “Evolution and Divine Revelation,” in *Evolution and Ethics: Human Morality in Biological and Religious Perspectives*, Philip Clayton and Jeffery Schloss, eds. (Cambridge: Eerdmans Company, 2004), p. 154.

evolution of human morality.<sup>166</sup> She summarizes for us four competing scientific hypothesis why humans exhibit “extended altruism” (altruism beyond kin and reciprocation) which we condense:

First hypothesis sees extended altruism as “non-adaptive side effect of other adaptive traits.” As intelligent beings, we envisage possible outcomes of our actions, and hence we select or prefer certain actions to others based on our judgment of beneficial outcomes. We are self-conscious and aware of the self-consciousness of others. While these qualities might be adaptive, its combination gives rise to “extended altruism and morality as a side effect.”<sup>167</sup> Second hypothesis holds that morality and altruism beyond kin and reciprocation are culturally inherited traits. While genes predispose us to morality but only limited to kin, culture teaches us to act that way and we experience groups that promote altruism and morality outcompete others that do not. Third hypotheses see altruism and morality as both adaptive and gene based. Altruism and morally right behavior have long term benefits such as improved social status and respect. Moreover, those who hold this view also argue that it is a requirement for group membership since groups abhor someone who is consistently selfish. The fourth hypothesis holds that “altruism and morality are adaptive at group level.” The argument here is that though altruistic persons are less advantaged than the selfish ones in the same group, nevertheless, the benefits to the members of the group “outweigh the costs imposed by the few selfish members” in the group. The altruistic individuals for example have less offspring precisely because they take care of the others. So it concludes, “Altruism is group selected if there is a large amount of group-

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<sup>166</sup> Loren Haarsma, *Ibid.* pp 154-5.

<sup>167</sup> Haarsma, *ibid.* p. 155

group competition and if there is occasional mixing of group membership especially if altruists can cluster when forming a group.”<sup>168</sup>

What is common to these claims was that morality and altruism evolved, the specific difference being as to whether it evolved genetically or culturally (or a mix of both). Evidently, there is little agreement here as to how to explain the paradox of altruism beyond kin and reciprocation in the light of the claim we have selfishness encoded in our genes. Radical social Darwinists like E. O Wilson will nonetheless argue that “philosophers and biologicized” should hands off ethics. According to him, human behavior is a “circuitous technique” for preserving the human genetic material. Therefore, morality has no other “demonstrable ultimate function.”<sup>169</sup> Michael Ruse concludes with Wilson that “ethics is an illusion fobbed off on us by our genes to get us to cooperate.”<sup>170</sup> Michael Ghiselin puts it even more blatantly:

No hint of genuine charity ameliorates our vision of society, once sentimentalism has been laid aside. What passes as cooperation turns out to be a mixture of opportunism and exploitation... Given a full chance to act in his own interest, nothing but expediency will restrain [a person] from brutalizing, from maiming, from murdering – his brother, his mate, his parents, or his child. Scratch an “altruist” and watch a “hypocrite” bleed.<sup>171</sup>

There is little incentive for pursuing this line of argument here because it often leads to a conceptual *cur de sac*. Evolution scientists need to be more humble in their claims. Steve Rose is

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168 Haarsma, *ibid.* p. 155-6

169 E. O. Wilson, *Sociobiology: A New Synthesis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975). p. 562 Michael Ruse, a philosopher, has the same argument – our belief in morality is merely an adaptation put in place to further our reproductive ends. See Michael Ruse and E. O Wilson, “The Evolution of Ethics,” *New Scientist* 108, no 1478 (10):1985, pp. 51-52.

170 Michael Ruse and E. O Wilson, “The Evolution of Ethics,” *New Scientist*, *ibid.* p. 51-2

171 Michael Ghiselin, *The Economy of Nature and Evolution of Sex* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 247.

a Neuroscientist that accepted the limitations inherent in the data and inadequacy of science in answering these questions. He says:

What, if any, are the limits of our possible knowledge? Are there some things we cannot in principle know?....I realize that...natural scientist's understanding is bound to be inadequate, 'Solving' brain and mind in the lab isn't same as doing so in our daily life. In the lab we can still all aspire to objectivity, examining the workings of other brains – or even imaging our own – yet we go home in the evening to our subjective, autobiographical world, and aspire to make personal sense of our lives and loves. Neuroscientist must learn to live with this contradiction. Biological psychiatrists who may be convinced in their day-to-day practice that affective disorders are the results of disturbed serotonin metabolism will still discover existential despair beyond the “merely chemical” if they sink into depression. Neurophysiologists who can plot in exquisite detail the passage of nervous impulses from motor cortex to the muscles of the arm feel certain none the less that they exert ‘free will’ if they ‘choose’ to lift their arm above their head. Even those most committed to a belief in the power of the genes somehow assume that they have the personal power to transcend genetic potency and destiny. When Steven Pinker so notoriously put it, ‘if my genes don't like what I do, they can go and jump in the lake.’ Or less demotically, when Richard Dawkins concluded his influential book *The Selfish Gene* by insisting that ‘only we can rebel against the tyranny of our selfish replicators’, they merely gave naïve vent to the rich inconsistency we all experience between our ‘scientific’ convictions and our own lived lives.<sup>172</sup>

Steve Rose provides us in the above lines refreshing viewpoints from his field of neurobiology that helps shed light on some of the wild claims of his peers. It affirms there is a limitation not just of human knowledge in general but specifically as to what claims science can make. It admits there is a gap between the “objectivity” of lab work and the “subjective” dimension of lived experience; the same gap exists between the “chemical nature” of depression and the “experience” of the depression itself; between “nervous impulses” in our brain and the reality of human freedom. He affirms, using even the most radical of the claimants (Dawkins), that there is a gap between “scientific” data and the deeper realities of our lives. In other words, even if there

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<sup>172</sup> Steven Rose, *The Future of the Brain: The Promise and Perils of Tomorrow's Neuroscience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 187-188.

is sufficient scientific data that we are determined to behave in a certain manner does not imply necessarily we will do so in absolute terms. That makes a world of difference.

Does it mean we should disregard the argument on selfish genes? It is not in our interest to do so. There is abundant evidence from lived experience that we seem to have a natural tendency towards selfishness than altruistic behavior. From a purely philosophical viewpoint, **Thomas Hobbes** (1588 – 1679) made that argument forcefully almost four centuries ago. According to him, human beings are equal by nature; they have equal ability to aspire for goals. This gives rise to “equality of hope” with regard to ends that constitutes the basis for conflict in society.

From this equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end, which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only, endeavor to destroy, or subdue one another. And from hence it comes to pass, that where an invader hath no more to fear, than another man’s single power: if one plant, sow, build, or possess a convenient seat, others may probably be expected to come prepared with forces united, to dispossess, and deprive him, not only of the fruit of his labor, but also of his life, or liberty. And the invader again is in the like danger of another.<sup>173</sup>

The foregoing is man “in the state of nature” ruled by native drives of self-interest such that competition is inevitable. Competition as a function of the desire to procure what one needs or wants, and its preservation from others who might want the same, gives rise to fear and war – the “war of all against all.”

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<sup>173</sup> Thomas Hobbes, “Leviathan: Morality as Rational Advantage” in *Moral and Moral Controversies: Readings in Moral, Social, and Political Philosophy*, edited by John Arthur (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005), p. 3. Hobbes not only is first philosopher to stress self-interest as a natural law but also the first to insist on appetite as the primary source of moral action without detriment to what have been said regarding Aristotle above.



The refutation of Hobbes' model of "psychological egoism" (as it has come to be known) is still relevant to the argument evolution scientists raise today.<sup>174</sup> The view that all human action is motivated by self-interest, no matter how altruistic they may seem, attacks not just the very foundations of morality but of our humanity as well. Brody offers us three major counter arguments by opponents of this view like H. A. Pritchard and Francis Hutcheson.<sup>175</sup> First is the claim that our own moral "feelings"<sup>176</sup> confirm to us that we often perform moral acts for other reasons apart from self-interest, like acting for the sake of duty or to do the right thing. Second, we see in the actions of others that they have nothing to gain from a particular moral action (an extension of the first claim). This is presented by Pritchard in these words:

We obviously are referring to a fact when we speak of someone as possessing a sense of duty and, again, a strong sense of duty. And if we consider what we are thinking of in these individuals whom we think of as possessing it, we find that we cannot exclude from it a desire to do what is a duty, as such, for its own sake, or, more simply, a desire to do what is right, then admit the existence of a desire to do what is right, then there is no longer any reason for maintaining as a general thesis that in any case in which a man knows some action to be right, he must, if he is to be led to do it, be convinced that he will gain by doing it. For we shall be able to maintain that his desire to do what is right, if strong enough, will lead him to do the action in question in spite of any aversion from doing it which he may feel on account of its disadvantages.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Baruch Brody, "Morality and Rational Self-Interest," in *Morality and Moral Controversies*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 13. For a substantive critique of all aspects of Hobbes views, see A.G.N. Flew, "Hobbes" in *A Critical History of Western Philosophy*, edited by D.J. O'Connor, New York: The Free Press, 1985, pp.153-169. He prefers "tautological egoism" to "psychological egoism".

<sup>175</sup> B. Brody cites the independent arguments of Pritchard and Hutcheson both of who hold the view that morality is based on other motives beyond self-interest. See, B. Brody, "Morality and Rational Self-Interest," *Ibid.* p. 12-14.

<sup>176</sup> Francis Hutcheson argue that the basis for virtuous action is found in a "determination of our nature to study the good of others, or some instinct antecedent to all reason from interest, which influences us to love others." Cited by Brody, *Ibid.*, p. 12

<sup>177</sup> H. A. Pritchard, *Duty and Interest*, quoted by Baruch Brody, "Morality of Rational Self-Interest," *Op. Cit.*, p. 12

Thirdly, he notes that we praise people for their good actions, especially of note is self-sacrificing actions. For instance, we praise an anonymous charitable donor more than we do the philanthropist who donates to a public school for the sake of public acclaim he gets. It implies that if all we do were based on self-interest, neither will there be such a distinction, nor would we be praising any virtuous actions. The implication of the above three arguments is that we act for motives other than self-interest. Pritchard and Hutcheson agree on the necessity of training children to develop a “desire to do the right thing” or the “concern for the well-being of others” respectively.<sup>178</sup> Both however acknowledge that the claim to act altruistically have been often proved to have acted from a covert self-interest. They therefore hold that self-interest and benevolence may “jointly excite a man to the same action, and then they are to be considered as two forces impelling the same body to motion.”<sup>179</sup> In other words, they are making a case for benevolence as co-existing with self-interest at a ratio that is indeterminate. If we determine the degree of self-interest involved we will then deduce from the remainder a motive of pure benevolence.

Brody also identifies three major arguments in favor of psychological egoism. The first is already noted above: experience shows that often those who seem to act from altruistic motives reveal ulterior motives of self-interest. Secondly, the claim that one acts from benevolence or sense of duty only confirms the motive of self-interest because the deeper motive would be the “pleasure” of making others happy or the “pleasure” accruing to them from a sense of being considered virtuous. It is this “pleasure” that is the real motive. Thirdly, all our actions have as

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<sup>178</sup> Cited by Brody, *ibid.*p.12

<sup>179</sup> Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, cited by Brody, *ibid.* p. 13

their ends the satisfaction of some desire, and therefore constitute a motive of self-interest.<sup>180</sup>

Brody refuted the three arguments.

He rejects the first claim on the ground that though it raises doubts about people's motives but does not provide sufficient reason to generalize that all actions are motivated from self-interest. Our experience shows that people act from other motive apart from self-interest. The second he considers more substantial but supposing its claims were true, "we will still have a reason for acting morally." Hutcheson already argues against this claim by pointing out the "pleasure" we get from acting altruistically (making others happy) is an unanticipated reward. In other words, it is not the goal aimed at while acting (or the end in view). Instead of intending this "pleasure" at the end of the act (which is not even guaranteed), we rather experience the "pain of compassion" such that even the removal of this pain does not "terminate our desire". If it were so, "we would run away, shut our eyes, or divert our thoughts from the miserable object as the readiest way to remove our pain."<sup>181</sup> He insists that our experience shows that we have a native instinct directed to the love and care of others.

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<sup>180</sup> Brody, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>181</sup> Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, cited by Brody, *Ibid*, p.14 Moritz Schlick cites the example of Martyrs to argue for the power of inspiration to evoke a sense of pleasure that overcomes the fear or pain of death. In his view, it is this "pleasure" (as the end in view) that motivates the Martyr. See, *The Problem of Ethics*, cited by Brody, *ibid.*, p. 14. While it is really absurd to compare the pain of being flayed alive with the "joy of inspiration" Moritz talks about, I do consider his example of the Martyr interesting for contemporary relevance given the phenomenon of "suicide bombing" by terrorists in this decade. In this instance, there are mixed motives: hatred for the "infidels" for which sufficient reason exists for seeking to harm the enemy (like in war). However, it does not seem to satisfy the fundamental assumption of Hobbes on "self-interest" since "self-preservation" is the first rule of nature. So, even if pleasure of inspiration or the anticipated "joys" of the future world, reduces the argument to absurdity given that the fundamental premise of self-interest is self-preservation.

Finally, Brody considers the third argument as resulting from a “common confusion”<sup>182</sup> that identifies all personal desires for acting with satisfying personal interests. Supposing I have a desire to help a poor lady heat her home during winter, the satisfaction of this desire is not to be identified with satisfying “self-interest” since there is no personal advantage. We might add, often satisfying a desire of this sort actually hurts us, or comes at a personal cost (a disadvantage) which we would have readily avoided if not for an internal sense of obligation to do the right thing, or the sense of compassion urging us to care, to show love despite the costs.<sup>183</sup>

David Hume is one modern philosopher (among others)<sup>184</sup> that made an extensive critique of psychological egoism (cites Epicurus, Atticus, Horace, Hobbes and Locke as sharing this view) as misrepresenting the facts of human experience. He considers this principle as arising from a “depraved disposition” and has a tendency to encourage similar depravity. It is the principle that claims “all benevolence is mere hypocrisy, friendship a cheat, public spirit a farce, fidelity a snare to procure trust and confidence;”<sup>185</sup> all as efforts in self-interest disguised as “benevolence” - a trap aimed at exposing others to our manipulations. He asserts that this form of philosophy is more a satire than a “true delineation or description of human nature” and cannot be accommodated in any serious reasoning.

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182 Brody, *ibid*, p. 15

183 *Ibid*

184 J. S. Mill (1806-1873) rejected the view that there is an internal necessity to act selfishly. He thinks however formation is central to good behavior. As to whether it is nature or nurture, he resists the argument but prefers to argue that even if the “moral feeling” were acquired rather than innate, it could over time possess the same “natural” flavor that we have in reason and /or language. J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, edited by George Sher, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. *In Morality and the Good Life, Loc. Cit.*, p. 323-9.

185 Hume, *Inquiry*, Op. Cit., p. 253.

Superficial reasoners, indeed, observing many false pretenses among mankind, and feeling perhaps, no very strong restraint in their own disposition, might draw a general and a hasty conclusion that all is equally corrupted, and that men, different from all other animals, and indeed from all other species of existence, admit of no degrees of good or bad, but are, in every instance, the same creatures under different disguises and appearances.<sup>186</sup>

Is it not disturbing that what Hume criticized centuries ago has actually taken center stage within critical “sciences” of human behavior today? I am certain they are not all “cynics.” It has become a common view in some circles that our motives are “an amalgam” of both our own interests and our interests in others.<sup>187</sup> Perhaps if these could borrow insight from Steve Rose, they will take a deep breath before making an absolute claim on a theme they hardly understand except, of course, making “irrational leaps” is part of the package in our DNA as Dan Ariely has forcefully argued recently as a “scientific theory” that we are “predictably irrational.”<sup>188</sup>

If “irrationality” is part of our DNA, then the story gets a bit more complex than what evolution scientists would admit. Michael J. Chapman actually argued in that direction rather indirectly some years earlier. He identified “passions” as the culprit for irrational behaviors which fortunately is not the preserve of humans. Our nearest cousins, the chimps, have recorded evidence of being “slaves to their passions” such that “rape, murder, and war” were part of their society. He included the “Seven Deadly sins” as part of the repertoire of observable behaviors

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<sup>186</sup> David Hume, *Inquiry into Human Understanding, Op. Cit.*, p.253. He traces this to a misguided love of philosophical “simplicity.” He cites examples of animals that are kind to their own and our species and wonders if we will admit a disinterested benevolence among them? He adds to this tenderness of a mother to her offspring that slaves over a sick child and dies of grief at his/her death. He queries about the meaning of “gratitude” as we attend to the welfare of a friend even at a cost – like taking care of a poor friend’s family after his death. How could this be motivated by self-interest?

<sup>187</sup> Robert C. Solomon, and Clancy W. Martin, *Op. Cit.*, p. 257.

<sup>188</sup> Dan Ariely, *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces that Shape our Decisions* (Harper Collins ebooks, 1998)

among chimps. They crave “sweets” as we do, leaving millions critically unhealthy due to irrational choices they consistently make, and knowingly so. His argument however is that the theory of “evolutionary trap” may explain the origin of evil and sin. He explains that “instinct” could “sometimes drive animals into self-destructive behaviors”.<sup>189</sup> He cites an example with leatherback turtles (*Dermochelys coriacea*) that evolved a food preference for jelly fish but now eat transparent plastic bags floating on the ocean that end up blocking their digestive tracts.<sup>190</sup> He then argues that the “seven deadly sins” found in Catholic tradition may well be our own “evolutionary traps” the understanding of which could provide insight as to the remedy. His analyses of these vices show credible outlines of how these tendencies possibly evolved.

For instance, he argues that we did not evolve thrift since our environmental cues consisting of “weather conditions, game availability, and constant predator threat”<sup>191</sup> during the hunting stage of our development did not provide us the opportunity for long-term planning. Hence, we have “evolved *greed* for material objects surpassing that of any other animal”.<sup>192</sup> He observes however that it is “*getting not having* that we seem to crave.”<sup>193</sup> It is the “irrationality” that results from this craving that corporate businesses are exploiting in their offers from credit card to automobile, to the last commodity on offer in the market today. It is possibly the same “irrationality” behind our cravings that resulted in the prime mortgage crises and the success of

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<sup>189</sup> Michael J. Chapman, “Hominid Failing: An Evolutionary Basis for Sin in Individuals and Corporations,” in *Evolution in Ethics: Human Morality in Biological and Religious Perspectives*, *Op. Cit.* p.103.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid* p. 104

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.* p. 104

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid* pp. 104-105

Madoff ponzi rip-off. He actually applied this in explaining corporate excess. He cites Ritzer's, *The McDonaldization Thesis*, as an example of how "hyperrational systems" led to "irrational consequences."<sup>194</sup> The McDonald franchise is organized as a hyperrational system that works because it is tightly scripted to the point that everyone "apes" what the system wants. The consequences are not just material gains but levels of irrational behaviors from employee to customers (consumers). This script has become blueprint for most businesses and it has crept into the academia as well. He then asserts: "the much touted DNA revolution is the product of McDonalized biology."<sup>195</sup> It has become so closely scripted and much of the work is done by robots that produce "made-to-order enzymes."<sup>196</sup> He admits that though genes connected to obesity, homosexuality, and alcoholism (among others), have been identified, only "radical reductionists" of the stripes of Richard Dawkins and/or E. O. Wilson explain these tendencies solely in terms of genes. But even Dawkins admits that memes (ideas developed within a culture) could enable us "rebel against the selfish replicators,"<sup>197</sup> but failed to draw from this corresponding logical conclusions except the claim that genes has no *teleos* apart from replication. This in itself is metaphysical reduction that is not supported by strict scientific proof.

Craig A. Boyd argues for a measure of correlation between the findings of evolutionary psychology and natural law but warns of its limitations.<sup>198</sup> He agrees there is sufficient evidence

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<sup>194</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.* p. 109

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.* p. 109

<sup>197</sup> He cites celibacy as an instance of how miming is used to overcome biological necessity showing the force of group norms in attaining this. See Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, pp. 180-215.

<sup>198</sup> Craig A. Boyd, "Thomistic Natural Law and the Limits of Evolutionary Psychology," in *Evolution and Ethics*, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 221-235.

to argue that moral norms like one prohibiting murder could have evolved from either kin selection or reciprocal altruism (both of which is found among *hymenoptera* like bees, ants, wasps; chimpanzee, and vampire bats)<sup>199</sup> that have corroborative evidence in research done among humans. In such a case, it could be argued that natural prohibition on murder is reason's ability to see the "necessary relationship between the principle of non-maleficence and social cohesion."<sup>200</sup> He however criticized evolutionary scientists for over generalizing their claims. Celibacy and Martyrdom has shown persistence that defies their basic claim. That Dawkins introduced the "meme" theory to explain away this human capacity to "rebel" against the genes presents an even more ridiculous position: how is it that biology evolves contradictory processes? If "meme" and "gene" are both inherited (the propagation process is the only difference), then biology seems to defeat itself.

Moreover, socio-biologists are yet to prove how humans adjudicate among competing impulses. When the Martyrs were faced with recanting their faith or face death, what impulse was behind their choice to be killed?<sup>201</sup> We might then add, what impulses were behind the choice for present day suicide bombers to set themselves ablaze? Surely their choices do not seem to follow the self-preserving necessity claims of evolutionary psychology.

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<sup>199</sup> William Hamilton's experiments confirm that female bees could have higher "co-efficient of relatedness" towards their sisters than their own daughters. See Genetic Evolution of Social Behavior, I and II. Journal of Theoretical Biology, 7:1-52 cited by C. A. Boyd, p.230; See also G. S. Wilkinson, "Reciprocal food sharing in vampire bats," *Nature*, (1984) 308:181-184; Franz de Waal, "The Chimpanzee's service economy: Food for Grooming," *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 1997: 18:375-86.

<sup>200</sup> Boyd, *Ibid*

<sup>201</sup> Boyd, *Ibid*, p. 232



Sociobiology and evolutionary psychology would therefore need philosophy and ultimately, theology to clarify these seeming puzzles. They constitute part of core behaviors, along with altruism beyond kin and reciprocation that sets human behavior apart from that of ants, bees, vampire bats, and their nearest cousins, the chimps. Thomas Aquinas did exactly that when he asserts that “there is in every human a natural inclination to act according to reason; and this is to act according to virtue.”<sup>202</sup> Therefore, Aquinas holds Martyrdom to be a “rational good” deriving from the need to preserve one’s integrity even at the cost of losing biological life.<sup>203</sup> But this rational good is not just any good but the “truth regarding one’s duty to God.” This is the impulse that overrides all other impulses – including self-preservation.

It is a fact that human beings have consistently shown they can forego biological life to fulfill what they consider an obligation imposed from within them, this not only puts a dent on the claim that selfishness is a necessity of nature but also brings us to a critical question this research hopes to explore: What “inclinations” is there in us that best mirrors the nature and nurture arguments? Is it not the human conscience? *Is it not conscience that makes it possible for the human organism to transcend the seeming necessity of the selfish gene?* When this becomes either dysfunctional or inactive, humans return to their native instincts and behave like the animals they *are*. In the next chapter we shall explore how conscience serves as the confluence

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<sup>202</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Ia IIae. Q.* 94.a3 Boyd argues that all acts of virtue fall under the natural law as they are prescriptions of reason.

<sup>203</sup> See Boyd, *Ibid.* p. 234

of nature and nurture providing the alternative theological explanation of how “gene” and “meme” come together in the development of our moral intuitions.<sup>204</sup>

While there is evidence that suggests humans evolved some norms culturally as either kin selection or altruism like other biological organisms, however, there is no hard evidence that explains the “evolution” of altruism beyond kin and reciprocation among humans. The claim that we are “predictably irrational” suggest an effort to “scientifically prove” what theology has known for millennia – that human inclinations go wild (become *disordered*) and disappoint us unless they are formed to that extent they come under the dictate of reason. Such formation is only possible through formation of conscience. Therefore, recent developments that find a correlation between our brain chemical impulses and trust or empathy would be very misleading if we conceive of a “chemical boost” to moral responsibility devoid of all internal mechanisms.

## 1.7 Methodological Considerations

The methodological model we intend to follow in this is the synthetic theological approach. Stephen B. Bevans provides us useful description of this model.<sup>205</sup> It is essentially a dialogical model. It is a model that is open to conversation with other views and currents of opinions across the spectrum of theological endeavor. The significant addition we have made is

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<sup>204</sup> Philosophers and some theologians have engaged social scientists on the debate about the origins of moral intuition for the better half of the last century. That debate will get more poignant as new discoveries are made in relation to DNA and behavior. Perhaps this will provide possible reasons for a paradigm shift and a new emphasis. Our intention for revisiting this debate at all is hinged on the assumption that new data will possibly impact our understanding of morality. From the foregoing, it does not indicate this will happen any soon. However, if data from neural science provides us with serious evidence about biological roots of empathy/trust/ and benevolence, it should inspire debate as to how this could be applicable to human development. Furthermore, the claim that poor countries are “low trust” societies or that “high trust” societies prosper should inspire debate in the developing world like Africa where *mutual distrust* still constitutes a primary hindrance to any meaningful development.

<sup>205</sup> Steven B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Loc. Cit. pp.89-102

to widen that openness to be more inclusive to voices and views from other disciplines. We are living at a time of an unprecedented overload of information. There are countless disciplines that have emerged to manage emerging fields of information. The rate at which new information is generated has become unbelievably fast that we are in danger of losing a sense of what it means to know something. Sharing information is not only a way to bring to our awareness to what is available already as an idea, but it is also a time proven method to capture in time and space significant ideas that are bound to be lost or submerged in a mass of data inevitable in an age of information overload. We precisely chose the synthetic model as providing us the best possible platform to listen to relevant data that could help us arrive at a broader understanding of our problematic and it provides a wider spectrum of possible solutions. The fields of social sciences have churned out unbelievable mass of data that will keep theological reflection active for a long time. This research pays attention to that mass of data because it considers its findings and conclusions of amazing import for theological reflection.

We adopt in this research Steve B. Bevans' idea of "model" which he conceives as "a conceptual construction" or theoretical views formulated from concrete realities. They are therefore neither "realities" as such nor mirror images of realities. However, they are "ideal types" and for that reason ought to be "taken seriously but not literally"<sup>206</sup> given that they help disclose the complex reality they tend to explicate, they help us to understand them. Given the complexity of the reality of human nature and experience that this project aims to understand, we consider it an imperative to employ a model that would not limit our options. It is with this

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<sup>206</sup> Steve B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, *Ibid* p. 29

consideration in mind that we chose the synthetic model over perhaps the merely anthropological or praxis models respectively precisely because of their limitations.

This choice does not imply our model is perfect. All models are ultimately inadequate. Bevans calls the synthetic model “the middle-of-the-road model.” It tries to synthesize the values inherent in other approaches to contextual theology. It values the insights in the anthropological, transcendental, praxis, translation, and countercultural models. Its uniqueness then lies in its effort to be as inclusive as possible. It listens not only to the insights of different schools of theology, but also opens itself to integrate the insights from relevant disciplines in other sciences (particularly the sciences of human behavior and the new discipline of moral psychology) adopting its findings as useful data for theological reflection. It is our aim that this wider inclusivity opens our research to a wider context and a wider conceptual understanding of our theme. However, this also opens us up to a wider critique. This inclusivity does not necessarily imply a compromise position is our aim but rather we envisage a creative dialogue across the different disciplines currently involved in understanding human behavior. The procedure for this model follows the description Bevans suggests:

The procedure of the synthetic model, one realizes, is very complex. However, the procedure is much more like producing a work of art than following a rigid set of directions. One needs to juggle several things at one time, but is not a matter of just keeping everything moving smoothly. One needs, rather, to place emphasis on message at one point, while at another point one needs to emphasize cultural identity. At one point traditional practices need to be cultivated. Perhaps at another set of circumstances, they need to be resisted.<sup>207</sup>

The advantage of this model is its capacity to promote the broadest “cross pollination” of ideas and cultural practices. It will seek to analyze both ideas and cultural practices spanning a wide

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<sup>207</sup> Bevans, *Ibid.* p. 92

spectrum of disciplines but always with attention to seek how these ideas and/or practices inform or could be shaped by Christian tradition and practices. Specifically, our analysis will seek from these cross disciplinary perspectives insights that could help us understand moral behavior in relation to conscience. We shall seek through this model a deeper understanding as to how conscience is significant for moral behavior and underscore the need for its retrieval.

A general critique of synthetic model is already noted above, the argument that it is a compromise view. Bevans refutes this argument as hinged on a correspondence theory of truth that sees the world in black and white instead of a kaleidoscope of colors. He cites David Tracy's "dialogical imagination" as appropriate metaphor to explain the postmodern worldview that compels us to enter into conversation with other points of view – especially when they differ from our own. The reason is that truth is not "out there" in static repose but discovered in relation and dialogue with others. He therefore counsels that *we should cultivate a mental attitude that sees truth discovery as a dialogical process rather than a static quality.*<sup>208</sup> In this dialogue with others, our true self and cultural identity will gradually be delineated. Therefore, instead of the model being a compromise of truth, it is an ongoing enquiry into fuller truth.

It is for this reason of a dialogical approach to truth discovery that we need to add here the insight of a Nigerian author on method in relation to African context and reality. We noted earlier that Elochukwu. E. Uzukwu, in his recent book, *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness*, identifies "relationality" (either as "duality" or "multiplicity") as constituting the primary

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<sup>208</sup> Bevans, *Ibid.* pp. 94-5

conceptual paradigm or approach for understanding African realities or their idea of “being in the world.”<sup>209</sup> With reference to methodology he asserts, inter alia, as follows:

[M]y methodological assumption is rooted in the structure of the West African approach to reality. This approach is fundamentally plural or multiple and therefore relational. What is not multiple does not exist. Ideas of twin-ness, duality, relatedness, and ambivalence dominate West African religion and anthropology. The grounding of these ideas is ontological – a contextual insight into being and reality. From Nigeria to Mali, it is the same story. Similar perceptions are found in Cameroon, Congo, and other central African countries. I will illustrate from the Igbo world and system of thought the relevance of duality, flexibility and relationality. The wisdom saying *ife kwulu ife akwudebe ya* (something stands and something else stands beside it) consecrates relationality and maintains a clear distance from absolutism.<sup>210</sup>

Uzukwu admits his view on “relationality” is indebted to the insights of Chinua Achebe (an outstanding Nigerian author) on the issue and would argue that “relational tension mediates being-in-the-world”<sup>211</sup> and would constitute the proper departure for any fruitful conversation particularly in the African context. It is important to note that Uzukwu’s view on relationality is totality in sync with our choice of the synthetic model. He further argues that “flexibility as a methodological starting point would enable the African theologians to adopt ‘a second viewpoint’” which is an *openness* necessary for inter-disciplinary conversation in the search of truth that the synthetic model espouses. It is not surprising then that he welcomes inter-disciplinarity as the right approach for unveiling the truth of the African reality – even though his focus on inter-disciplinarity is the humanist views of African literature.

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<sup>209</sup> Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2004), pp. 5, 6

<sup>210</sup> Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *ibid.* p. 5

<sup>211</sup> Uzukwu, *ibid.* p. 6

He therefore critiques the use of Western categories in exposing African realities.<sup>212</sup>

While we admit there is merit in his critique but we do not think it is easy at this point to push too hard on this front precisely because there is not enough African literature or resources “when you need them” to do a whole lot in some fields like theology. This is perhaps why he used Origen to “fully’ expose and “complement” his model.<sup>213</sup> In the light of this reality, it is our hope in this present study to borrow the seeds of insight from both African and Western authors. There is beauty in complementarity. Moreover, if there is abhorrence for all forms of “absolutism” in Igbo and/or African thought system, then the more reason it should not be a “selective” vision of what it implies. If one is trying to lay the foundation of criticality for African scholarship by insisting on “having a second look at everything” then putting absolute boundaries defeats the very idea one is protecting. “Flexibility”, “plurality”, a “second look at everything” are indications of a degree of *openness* to whatever is out there to be discovered as real and true. This viewpoint on methodology is in this sense squarely in sync with our chosen approach – the synthetic model.

Given the broad spectrum our research covers, we do admit certain limitations this imposes. This research does not claim to provide an exhaustive analysis of the ancillary themes we have accommodated (we particularly note that space does not allow an exhaustive discussions on evolution of morals, theories of community, and systemic corruption). Our analysis of conscience will focus on *processes* rather than on *formulation of norms*. As a result,

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<sup>212</sup> See Uzukwu, *ibid*, p. 31 While he admits plurality or relationality “insists that no one view of poverty covers all its dimensions” (p. 33), he goes on to argue that a broader view is needed by African theologians to understand depth and breadth of how their history (of colonialism and neo-colonialism) had shaped and continue to disfigure African psyche such that it impacts everything (paraphrase of p.33).

<sup>213</sup> See Uzukwu, *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness*, pp. 151-162

our approach to the theme does not give sufficient attention to the relationship of conscience to objective norms or law. Finally, given that we are interested more in how socio-moral processes in the formation of conscience impact character we do not have sufficient space to explore either the old debate on what constitutes the “common good” or of human “freedom”.

### **1.8. From Compactness to Differentiation: Is Critical Re-evaluation of Moral Formation Process and Traditions in Africa a Necessity?**

The excursus above in philosophical, theological, and scientific fields is definitely limited in content and extension given our scope. But it situates our discourse squarely within the tradition of a universal problematic that hardly has ultimate answers. Even though it defies ultimate answers, it does not imply we should abandon seeking for possible answers. An essential part of seeking solution to human problems is the ability to provide a coherent description of the problem itself. To do this, one needs proper distinctions. This research insists on the urgent need for a transition from a rigid compactness to a more differentiated evaluation of all African institutional and social-cultural structures and practices. It is only recently that scholars are beginning to leave behind the stale argument of whether there is an African philosophy or theology or not and proceed to actually philosophize and theologize from the African viewpoint. This is laudable. However, we think the next step is to either continue the current descriptive analysis of African traditions and socio-cultural structures or leapfrog the process and begin a critical reassessment of these traditional structures that we describe to either reveal their value or disvalue for holistic social transformation and to advance knowledge.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Some African scholars are already beginning to do this. For instance, Segun Gbedegesun in his analysis of Yoruba traditional religion was able to uphold the value of that tradition but critiques it at the same time. For instance, he questions the veracity of holding “Olodumare,” the “creator God” as omniscient when he had to visit an



The reasons for suggesting this approach are varied. Firstly, we cannot possibly deny the value of critical evaluation of every human endeavor for it holds the key to a deeper understanding of every complex phenomenon. African traditions are archetypically complex phenomena. It is therefore imperative it needs critical re-evaluation by those who best understand it rather than allow those who do not comprehend its extensions to do so for us. Secondly, *we find the tendency to present African beliefs and traditions in ways that suggest them to be current mainline practices as misleading*. There is need for deeper analysis (and perhaps involving statistical data) as to the extent traditional beliefs and practices are currently upheld by majority of Africans or else reveal its marginal influence in their lived experience.

Thirdly, we cannot deny there are certain traditional beliefs and practices that are evidently unhealthy and in need of revision. We think the time for apologetics is without doubt historically relevant but need be superseded by internal critical analytics. Serious scholarly work is about facing the truth for what it is worth. Historically, some “sacred traditions” have actually been expunged in the past (like killing of twins and human sacrifices). Those are the obvious ones. Critical analysis will reveal more unhealthy practices. Obviously, there is need to develop some criteria to determine what “traditions” and “practices” are unhealthy for African development and wholesome living. This is the work for African scholars.<sup>215</sup>

Fourthly, we cannot deny there is an urgent need to “exorcise” most of the “spirits” from African minds and communities if a healthier lifestyle must prevail. The reason is obvious: there

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“*ifa* priest” at some time to “divine” for him whether he is immortal. It was the *Ifa* priest’s confirmation that eventually made him feel he is both immortal, all powerful, all knowing, among others. See S. Gbedegesan, *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities*, 1991, p. 32-38.

<sup>215</sup> We deeply appreciate the depth of critique of the African religious landscape by F. Eboussi Boulaga in *Christianity without Fetishes*, 1984, pp. 57-83;

is hard evidence in many African communities that the “bad spirits” have a stranglehold on the lives of people that is a source of anxiety and constant fear.<sup>216</sup> We cannot deny the fact that “witchcraft” remains a serious problem for the African psyche. We are of the view that a psycho-philosophical and theological *reconstruction* of African worldview is what is urgently needed far more than upholding the “values” inherent in our love of “spirits!”<sup>217</sup> This does not imply a call for thrashing our sacred traditions and values but to reconstruct them to meet present needs.

Fifthly, historical evidence shows that every human society at some time was “embedded” in traditional religions and practices of their fathers (the “Cretes,” “Slavs,” and “Barbarians”). They gradually evolved a new paradigms or “worldview” and new “traditions” that can respond favorably to their present historical realities. The key word is “critical adaptation.” We think Africa no longer needs to *receive uncritically* the traditions of the “elders” but evaluate them in the light prevailing circumstances and needs. When we receive “traditions” uncritically, we are bound to repeat its mistakes. For instance, it is arguable that our current orientation to education is yet to meet the criteria of what serves African needs. Our system of education is merely a rehearsal of western education that needs to be *critically revised* to address the “educational needs” of our realities in Africa.

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<sup>216</sup> See J. Obi Ogueji for, *The Influence of Igbo Traditional Religion on the Socio-political Character of the Igbo* (Nsukka: Falladu Publishing Company, 1996) p. 85; Misty L. Bastian, “Vulture men, Campus cults and teenaged witches: modern magic in Nigeria popular media,” in *Magical Interpretations, Material Realities: Modernity, Witchcraft and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*, Henrietta L. Moore and Todd Sanders eds. pp. 87-90; Peter Ceshiere, calls “witchcraft” an “obsession” among Africans that “haunts the elite as well as the rest of the population. See *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*, p. 1.

<sup>217</sup> Elochukwu E. Uzukwu in his recent book, *God, Spirits, and Human Wholeness*, 2012 is in our estimation a laudable reconstruction effort that opens a new window to a deeper understanding of our love of the spirits. However, it raises further questions on discernment of spirits. If “multiplicity” and “duality” are essential paradigms for understanding African relationships – including relationships with divinities, it is for that reason pertinent to question everything (or “look at everything twice”) including the true origins of the “spirits” we pay reverence to. See Uzukwu, *God, Spirits, and Human Wholeness*, p. 21

Therefore, we are convinced there is an urgent need for African scholars (“leaders of thought”) to concentrate more on a *critical retrieval* and a deliberate effort towards *conceptual differentiation* of African traditions and practices that we consider as key to a deeper self-understanding and critical to a deeper comprehension and elucidation of the larger problems confronting African communities and nations. We do hope that the present research makes a humble contribution to that effort in the area of foundational moral structures. If a critical re-appraisal of this effort proves it to be inadequate, then we would have succeeded beyond measure.

## Chapter Two: Psychological and Theological Views of Conscience

### 2.0 Introduction to Chapter Two

This Chapter examines the notion and nature of conscience from both its psychological and theological perspectives. The last chapter reveals an ongoing debate regarding the evolution of morality and the reality of psychological theories of moral development have been a source of significant insight to our understanding of moral evolution and the formation of conscience. Therefore, in Part One, we will explore the views of representative moral development theorists: Freud, Adler, Erikson, Piaget, and Kohlberg. Their insights will provide a useful background for our reflection at every stage of this research. Moreover, though theological views of conscience serve as both a critique and complement of the psychological views examined here, at the same time it provides a background of critical assessment of theological suppositions of authors we reviewed herein.

Given the vast literature on this topic we limited our research specifically to the theological commentaries of these representative authors on conscience: Vatican II Fathers, Aquinas (used as main source for traditional view), Hoose, Hogan, Grisez and Shawn, Curran, Gula, Spohn, and Conn (represent a mix of contemporary theological positions). These authors provide us with an overview of insight of both the traditional and contemporary theological views on conscience – its notion, nature, and development. We noted at the beginning that our research stresses *process* rather than *content* because we aim at underscoring the value of moral formation as a “relational process.” This emphasis not only informs our interest in psychological theories of development but also the *content* of our theological reflection. So, instead of furthering here the debate on moral “objectivity” or the “authority” of the decisions of

conscience, our stress is shifted to certain “neglected aspects” of what constitutes for us the real “power” of conscience in “influencing” behavior. We think that by highlighting these “neglected aspects” we not only retrieve a more holistic understanding of the notion of conscience but also underscore its power for influencing human behavior.

Therefore, we will examine in this chapter the role of *feelings* in human behavior and its relationship to conscience. We will argue that feelings or emotions are not only the unacknowledged primary drivers of human behavior but that they are at the core of conscience. We argue that the emphasis on a cognitive definition of conscience has only helped to rob it of its power to influence behavior. Retrieving the sentient dimension of conscience restores its strength and power to influence behavior in deeper ways than we admit or realize – beyond mere decisions related to individual acts to encompass our deepest life orientation, informs the principles we live by, shapes our character, and is at the heart of the persons we are or who we become. It is only from this perspective of the significance of conscience for our *being* or *becoming* that paying more serious attention to its formation becomes an imperative.

We therefore examine in this section the relationship of feelings to conscience and behavior, the role of guilt and shame to conscience, and the significance of perception of moral atmosphere to conscience formation. Finally we examine whether there is a unique notion of conscience in Africa. Our critical synthesis tries to bring out the salient points that link this chapter to our goals and to the other segments of this research.

## 2.0.1 CONSCIENCE: PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

### 2.1 SIGMUND FREUD (1856-1939)

Freud provides us a rather controversial study on the psychology of moral development with specific emphasis on the significance of early childhood development that this research considers significant in having a basic grasp of not only the human psyche but also a popular understanding of the psychological notion of conscience. We will provide a synthesis of his position and complement that with an analysis of other representative psychological views of moral development.

Freud postulates three psychic *operations* of the adult personality (the *id*, *ego*, and *superego*) that has become classic in understanding the human psychical structure. Given that these have significant implication for any psychological understanding of the notion and formation of conscience today, they will constitute our emphasis in Freud. These operatives develop within the first two decades of life and their interactions determine human behavior when confronted with moral situations. They do not arise at the same time (except the *id* that is present at birth) but developed overtime through the stages of childhood development. We shall describe these operatives and how it relates to conscience.

In his book, *The Ego and the Id*, Freud develops the notion of these psychical operatives only after his theory of *consciousness*. He divides the human psyche into the “conscious” and the “unconscious”. While the former is evident from direct experience, the latter is deduced from his “theory of repression” that he considers as “the prototype of the unconscious.”<sup>218</sup> There are

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<sup>218</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, trans by Joan Riviere (London: Hogarth Press, 1927), p. 12

certain ideas that we have present in consciousness, but only temporarily. These ideas are *latently* present in the unconscious and could be recalled with some effort. This describes the first level of the unconscious: the preconscious. There are other ideas in the unconscious that are not accessible to us but occasionally reveal their presence through dreams or hypnosis. These are “repressed” ideas embedded deep in the prototypical unconscious. Psychoanalysis is then a process aimed at interpreting the symbolic expression of the unconscious (present in dreams or other expressions) and to help resolve the repressed conflicts they represent in the person’s past.

In the final analysis, Freud divides the psyche into the *conscious*, *preconscious* and *unconscious*. In the unconscious is reposed the motive force of most actions. This motive force (or energy) is a derivative of unconscious instincts relating to life and death both of which are in constant tension – as they compete for dominance. *Eros* is the life instinct that finds expression in constructive and creative acts like caring, self-sacrifice, altruism, and love. *Thanatos* is the death instinct that expresses itself in all forms of destructive acts, hate, and aggression. Freud called the life energy *libido*; there is no name for the death energy even though it wins over the life instinct in the end.<sup>219</sup>

The *Id* is a primordial “instinct” of a sexual nature (wholly unconscious). It “contains everything that is inherited, that is present at birth, that is laid down in the constitution – above all, the instincts.”<sup>220</sup> It represents what the individual would love to do were there no restrictions

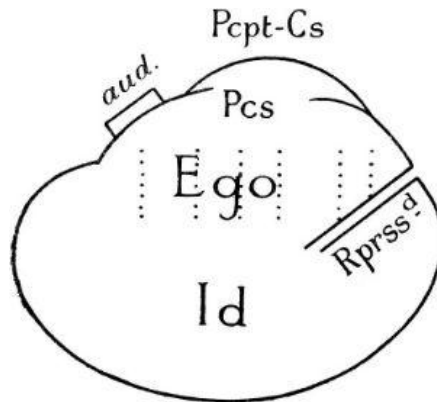
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<sup>219</sup> R. Murray Thomas, *Moral Development Theories – Secular and Religious: A Comparative Study* (London: Greenwood Press, 1997), p. 95. Freud stressed the critical role of the sexual instinct in his earlier writings, but after the War (WWI) the aggressive and death instincts were also critical. In all, *internal psychic forces* (as basic instincts) seem to determine human behavior.

<sup>220</sup> Sigmund Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (London: Hogarth, 1973), p. 2 cited by R. M. Thomas, *Moral Development Theories, Ibid.* P. 95.

to his/her freedom.<sup>221</sup> The libidinal energy in the id “pressures” for expression. According to Freud, its origin is traceable to the infantile experiences of these libidinal pressures as “pain” and its release as “pleasure”. Hence, the id is conceived as a *pleasure principle* – seeks for pleasure and avoidance of pain at all costs. The infant is a bundle of instincts: seeks comfort (need for food, drink, discharging wastes, affection) and avoidance of pain (not fulfilling the above needs at any time). It therefore cries to get these needs met. The senses (taste, touch, smell, sight, or hearing) actively record whatever helps or thwarts the fulfilling of these needs so as to seek their repeat and vice versa. Evidently, this process is at this stage amoral. The id is essentially selfish, but it has no knowledge of right and wrong. It will have to learn control of its appetites through another mechanism of control: the *ego* and *superego* based on environmental cues.

### Freud’s Illustration: Ego and the ID<sup>222</sup>



<sup>221</sup> John Martin Rich and Joseph L. DeVitis, *Theories of Moral Development* (Springfield, Illinois, Charles C Thomas, 1985), p. 18

<sup>222</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Ego and Id* (London: Hogarth Press, 1927) p. 29. Pcpt-Cs is *perceptible consciousness*.



**The Ego**, according to Freud, is that “part of the id” that evolved out of the infant’s relationship with the external world. Unlike the unconscious id, the ego is conscious, though not wholly so. It is a “modification” of the id, as the super-ego is also a “modification” of the ego. He says:

It is easy to see that the ego is that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world acting through the Pcpt-Cs: in a sense it is an extension of the surface-differentiation. Moreover, the ego has the task of bringing the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavors to substitute the *reality-principle* for the *pleasure-principle* which reigns supreme in the id. In the ego perception plays the part which in the id devolves upon instinct. *The ego represents what we call reason and sanity, in contrast to the id which contains the passions.* All this falls into line with popular distinctions which we are all familiar with; at the same time, however, it is only to be regarded as holding good in an average or 'ideal' case.<sup>223</sup>

The ego, as a “reality-principle,” puts a check on the native instincts (desires) of the id, the “pleasure-principle” noting his caveat that it happens only in ‘ideal cases’. It “negotiates between id’s demands and requirements of the physical and social environments,” ever seeking a compromise or a realistic approach to such demands in the light of societal demands and other contingent conditions. It is the role of the ego to interpret (as a “secondary process”) the instinctual images (“primary process”) of the id into implementable actions. As a result, it affords the child its primary sense of what is acceptable behavior and a basic sense of penalties for infringing on these.<sup>224</sup> The child gradually learns overtime how to adjust its needs to societal demands, responding to moral situations in the more acceptable ways while at the same time juggling to fulfill the desires of the id. If the ego develops to be strong and mature, it will respond appropriately, being more forthright and sincere than a weaker one. A weaker ego adopts “defense mechanism” or “ego adjustment mechanisms” as a substitute measure to cover up its inadequacies. Some of these mechanisms are: *repression, projection, regression,*

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<sup>223</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Ego and the Id*, Trans. Joan Riviere (London: Hogarth Press, 1927), p. 30. The stress is ours.

<sup>224</sup> See R. Murray Thomas, *Moral Development Theories, Ibid.* p. 96.

*rationalization, escape, Denial, compensation, and sublimation.* The last two however are considered to be positive.<sup>225</sup>

*Repression* is a non-conscious process whereby the ego suppresses uncomfortable material by pushing it away from the conscious part of the psyche to the unconscious. This implies that the ego can operate at both the conscious and unconscious levels. *Projection* is when the ego attributes to others the demands of the id that it finds discomfoting in itself. *Regression* is when the ego takes recourse to a more primitive mode of dealing with moral difficulties (for instance, a husband caught by his wife in an act of infidelity bursts into anger tantrums). *Rationalization* is when the ego displaces an unacceptable behavior with one that is socially acceptable. *Escape* is an attempt by the ego to vacate the location (physical or psychological) that is the source of pain.<sup>226</sup> *Denial* is when the ego shields itself from an uncomfortable experience by a “denial of external reality” (*verleugnung*).<sup>227</sup> *Compensation* is the ego’s attempt to substitute success in another area of life in order to balance-out the area of weakness. *Sublimation* is the ego’s effort to substitute a less virtuous approach to fulfilling the instinctual drives with a more virtuous one – a better or higher approach that is more culturally and socially

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<sup>225</sup> George E. Vaillant argues that “for Freud, the defenses of denial, distortion, and projection were defenses of psychosis. At the opposite end of the continuum, sublimation, altruism, humor, and suppression were the defenses of maturity. Between these two groups of defense mechanisms were splitting, hypochondriasis, turning against the self, phantasy, dissociation, repression, isolation, undoing, displacement, and reaction formation – defenses that Freud believed to be the hallmark of neurosis.” See, *Ego Mechanisms of Defense: A Guide to clinicians and Researchers* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, Inc., 1992), p.9

<sup>226</sup> See also R. Murray Thomas, *Moral Development Theories*, *ibid.* pp. 97-8

<sup>227</sup> See George E. Vaillant, *Ego Mechanisms of Defense*, *ibid.* p. 10.

acceptable. It implies that all altruistic acts are essentially “sublimations” of certain instinctual drives.<sup>228</sup>

The *Superego* is a “special psychical agency” that regulates the selfish demands of the *id* to conform with socially acceptable standards of behavior. As noted above, it is a “modification” of the ego, or as Freud would say, it is “a special function within the ego, to represent the demand for restriction and rejection, i.e. the super-ego – either that it does its work on its own account or else that the ego does it in obedience to its orders.”<sup>229</sup> For Freud, the superego is the psychical apparatus for ensuring the individual adapts to moral standards, customs and ethos of the people with whom he/she lives. It is synonymous with (or includes) “conscience” because it regulates right and wrong behavior by encouragement or punishment of respective behaviors. The superego is the last to evolve among the three psychical apparatus – it develops as the child observes and learns to adapt to what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviors. Freud holds that the neonate comes into the world *amoral, as a moral tabula rasa* (with no knowledge of right or wrong) and whatever moral knowledge it possess comes from interaction with the outside world starting from parents, caregivers, peers, teachers, religious leaders, counselors, media, among others.<sup>230</sup> However, note that thought these representatives of “external sanctions” overtime will transform into “internal sanctions” that speaks in its own voice or authority. Perhaps this, along with the negativity associated with its role, explains why Freud sees conscience as essentially neurotic. His view of conscience is that it evolved as part of

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<sup>228</sup> For the foregoing see R. Murray Thomas, *Moral Development Theories, Ibid.* p. 98

<sup>229</sup> Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, translated by W.J. H. Sprott (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1938), p. 98

<sup>230</sup> R. M. Thomas, *Ibid.* p. 99

the superego, even as he distinguishes *conscience* and *ego ideal*. R.M. Thomas puts it more succinctly thus:

Freud portrayed the ego as having two facets, the *conscience* and the *ego ideal*. The conscience represents the “should nots” of society, the things for which the child will be punished. The ego ideal represents the “shoulds,” the positive moral values the child has been taught. Whereas very young children must be punished for transgressions and rewarded for good behavior by their parents and guardians, older children and adolescents often do not need outside sanctions. For breaching the values they have now accepted as their own, their conscience metes out punishment in the form of distressing emotions. For abiding by their moral values, their ego ideal rewards them with approval and praise.<sup>231</sup>

We shall see in the next section that there is indeed a certain correlation in Freud’s view of conscience with theological development of the concept. As R. M. Thomas would argue, in Freud’s view, moral behavior of older children and adults is a function of how the ego “negotiates a settlement among three sources of conflicting demand”: the id, the environment, and the superego.<sup>232</sup> The difficulty is establishing the role of conscience in this dynamic process. Since our interest in Freud is his view of the evolution and role of conscience in human behavior, let us explore more of his views on conscience.

We have already seen above that conscience is, or is part of, the superego. In *Totem and Taboo* he presents what he calls “taboo conscience” as the oldest form of this phenomenon.

Conscience is the inner perception of objections to definite wish impulses that exist in us; but the emphasis is put upon the fact that this rejection does not have to depend on anything else, that it is sure of itself. This becomes even plainer in the case of guilty conscience, where we become aware of the inner condemnation of such acts which realized some of our definite wishes....Whoever has a conscience must feel in himself the justification of the condemnation, and the reproach for the accomplished action. But this same character is evinced by the attitude of

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<sup>231</sup> R. M. Thomas, *Ibid.* p. 99.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid*

savages towards taboo. Taboo is a command of conscience, the violation of which causes a terrible sense of guilt which is as self-evident as its origin is unknown.<sup>233</sup>

Freud basically reduced conscience to a “social anxiety” or what he calls “soziale Angst” (fear of society)<sup>234</sup> resulting from a conflict between the “pleasure principle” and the “reality principle” in relation to the demands of its social environment. Given that the ego response to this conflict is repression, it is predictable what the conclusion would be: acts based on conscience cannot but be a neurotic manifestation of repressed social angst. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, he elaborates on this angst. First is the “renunciation due to the dread of the loss of love” that would result if one were to act in a way other than what society demands. Second is the “the erection of the internal authority, and instinctual renunciation due to dread of it – this is the dread of conscience.” Third is the sense of guilt that follows should one actually act otherwise than expected – an internalized expectation of or need for punishment, what Frederick Nietzsche called a “need for self-flagellation.”<sup>235</sup> In the end, conscience is nothing but an internalization of hostile parental and social mechanisms of control that the mature would or should outgrow.

Freud’s contribution to the development of the formation of conscience is above all, and apart from the foregoing, a characterization of conscience as a “neurotic” manifestation of social angst. Coming at a time of deep social sympathy for scientific approach to human knowledge, his conclusions backed by scientific observations was able to influence a generational change towards the notion of conscience more than we are ready to admit. It is this negative connotation associated with the concept of conscience after Freud that remains its albatross. Perhaps an even

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<sup>233</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, translated and edited by A.A. Brill, (New York: The Modern Library, 1938), pp. 859-60. Freud makes reference to the Greek *Oedipus Myth* here.

<sup>234</sup> See Sigmund Freud, *Repression* in *General Selections*, Rickman Edition (London: Hogarth Press, 1915), p. 109.

<sup>235</sup> Frederick Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, pp. 87, 92-3

deeper consequence is perhaps his conclusions evident in his critique of Kant views of conscience summarized as:

God has been guilty of an uneven and careless of piece of work [referring to conscience], for a great many men have only a limited share of it or scarcely enough to be worth mentioning... it is very remarkable experience to observe morality, which was once ostensibly conferred on us by God and planted deep in our hearts, functioning as a periodical phenomenon. For after a certain number of months the whole moral fuss is at an end, the critical voice of the super-ego is silent, the ego is re-instated, and enjoys once more all the rights of man until another attack.<sup>236</sup>

The implication is that Freud sees conscience as not only ethically impotent (does not influence behavior) but a “neurotic” contraction of the human psyche in need of healing.<sup>237</sup> At best, conscience is but an evolved mechanism for observing social regulations without which social ordering is jeopardized along with the individual. In this sense, adhering to the voice of conscience is then an “enlightened self-interest.”<sup>238</sup>

While we do not see anything wrong with admitting this latter view, but it is refuting his critical contributions to the disruption of the notion of conscience that reconstructive research on this theme should focus on. In that regard we need to point out that there is no reason arising from his analysis that would not admit the distinction that he makes between conscience and ego-ideal to be revised whereby the ego-ideal becomes the positive aspect of conscience. Hence,

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<sup>236</sup> Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, translated by W. J. Sprott (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1938), p. 88 Emphasis is ours.

<sup>237</sup> Freud’s view of moral development is cast against the background of fear or “anxiety,” the result of “Oedipal complex” (for boys) and “Electra complex” (for girls). However, while the boys have “castration anxiety” and therefore strong super-ego development, girls (and subsequently women) have a weaker superego development since they already are somewhat ‘castrated’ and have “penis envy” as an anxiety to deal with. As a consequence, ideally, men should have stronger moral sense than women. Of course there are many objections to this argument (See Carol Giligan as an example), and there is hardly any evidence from experience that justifies this wide claim.

<sup>238</sup> John M. Rich and J. L. DeVitis, *Theories of Moral Development, Op Cit.*, p. 19

instead of conceiving the ego as constituted by conscience and ego ideal (where conscience is identified with superego), the identification of the two in the one reality of conscience frees his thesis from its ambiguity but allows conscience to be retrieved and rehabilitated. It is precisely the neglect of the positive aspect of conscience (its self-transcending role) enabled by this forced distinction, that paves the way for its trashing as a neurotic appendage. Our synthesis at the end of this chapter may attempt a submission on this. Let us at this point present an overview of some other significant psychological viewpoints, after Freud that could throw some light on the notion of conscience and its development.

**2.1.2 Alfred Adler (1870-1937)**, was Freud's student who parted ways with his master based on an intellectual disagreement on the foundations and goals of psychoanalysis. Adler views Freud's approach as too fixated on sexuality and deterministic to the extent that it reduces *all* human behavior to intra-psychic and biological drives. He instead founded a school of "individual psychology" to emphasize individual uniqueness and the influence of social dynamics and relationships.

Adler argues that the goal of life is the development of "social interest" as a "compensation for all the natural weaknesses of individual human beings."<sup>239</sup> Social interest is a quality that serves as the index of maturity in both personal and cultural entities. In other words, the degree of social interest present in an individual or culture is the determinant of its maturity or development. He argues that each person comes into the world in a state of deficiency or "inferiority" and goes through life striving towards "superiority" in an attempt to overcome or "compensate" for the lack. The proper trajectory of that striving is towards the development of

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<sup>239</sup> Alfred Adler, *Problems of Neurosis* (London: Kegan Paul, 1929), p. 31

social interest; this implies a less striving for personal interests and a shift towards building of the community.<sup>240</sup> His notion of "*Gemeinschaftsgefühl*" (community feeling) captures his idea that the process of personality development should be (teleological) directed towards "completeness" or "wholeness" (holism). This wholeness involves the individual consciously choosing to act for the interest of the larger whole – the community. However, if the individual overcompensates in an effort to adhere to community and environmental cues, he/she develops inferiority complex that leads to a pathological striving for power, aggressive behavior, among other ills.

Though Adler's analysis is criticized for "lack of rigor, depth, and precision,"<sup>241</sup> nevertheless, we do consider his analysis illuminates an important aspect of basic socio-moral process of development that Freud's analysis tends to overlook. Though he presents us with no systematized process regarding development of conscience, he does provide us insight as to what its role and content should be: its role could be assumed as spurring the process of self-transcendence as the individual matures from a fixation on self-interest towards the interest of the community. Acquiring a sense of "community feeling" (an interest for the good of the community) is the ultimate criteria for social ordering and development not just for the community, but for the individual as well. This is the critical role of conscience.

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<sup>240</sup> See Adler, *Co-operation between the Sexes: Writings on Women and Men, Love and Marriage, and Sexuality*, Ansbacher, Heinz L. and Rowena R., Eds. (New York: Norton, 1978) pp. 49, 147-148, 168-169; See also Rudolf Derikurs, *Social Equality: The Challenge of Today* (Chicago: Regnery, 1971), p. viii.

<sup>241</sup> John Martin Rich and Joseph L. DeVitis, *Theories of Moral Development, Op. Cit.*, p. 32; See also, Russell Jacoby, *Social Amnesia: A Critique of Contemporary Psychology from Adler to Laing* (Boston: Beacon, 1976). But Jon Carlson and Michael P. Maniaci (eds.) have argued to the contrary in *Adler Revisited* (New York: Routledge, 2012).



**2.1.3. Erik H. Erikson (1902-1994):** Erickson applies broader resources of interdisciplinary research involving anthropology, religion, cross-cultural studies, and psychology to deepen our understanding of the process of moral development. As a consequence, he leaves us with a broader and more inclusive vision of the influences and the trajectory of human moral development than Freud or Adler. Essentially, he modifies Freud's eight stage theory of psychosexual development to capture the deeper influence of the larger society (not just the family as we find in Freud). His "life cycle" (in eight stages) condenses eight primary "stages" of development that may overlap; but it is expected that problems arising from each stage need proper resolution for a healthy growth and moral development. It is not possible to accommodate the full breadth of his analysis for lack of space. We will concentrate on aspects that impacts conscience formation.

Erikson's "life cycle" consists of these eight polarities: 1. Trust vs. mistrust; 2. Autonomy vs. shame; 3. Initiative vs. guilt; 4. Industry vs. inferiority; 5. Identity vs. role diffusion; 6. Intimacy vs. isolation; 7. Generativity vs. stagnation; 8. Ego integrity vs. despair. The first polarity is the psychosocial crisis the neonate undergoes as it tries to balance basic trust against mistrust which, if properly resolved, provides the child with the critical virtue of hope in life that is the cornerstone of a healthy person. He holds that this develops in the child, in the first year of life, primarily through the quality of care it receives from the mother. He sees this basic trust as consisting in an "essential trustfulness of others as well as a fundamental sense of one's own trustworthiness."<sup>242</sup> He warns that a pure trust is naïve and inappropriate. This trust arises as a counterweight to mistrust. It is in the struggle to overcome a sense of "nostalgia" for the womb,

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<sup>242</sup> Erick Erickson, *Identity, Youth, and Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1968), p. 96.

“of having been divided” and of “having being abandoned” that this trust emerges accompanied by an inner orientation that would reassure one that all is well throughout the struggles and uncertainties of life.<sup>243</sup> This inner orientation that comes with trust is the ground for hope so vital through life. It is obvious that the significance of self-esteem is no longer in dispute today. It is now common knowledge that if the child does not feel “all right” with self, nothing will be alright in life. We add here that if *basic mistrust* is the child’s inner orientation, it will be difficult for that child as an adult to trust others *precisely because its capacity for self-transcendence experienced a primary hiatus*. We shall indicate later how this connects to conscience. If Erickson is right, it is possible to imply that in the first year of life, a child has the opportunity to be equipped, through nurture, with this critical tool for developing both a healthy sense of self and of others that is so crucial for community development.

The significance of the second stage (corresponds to Freud’s anal stage) is in helping the child develop an *autonomous will*. This emerges as the child struggles with balancing “letting go” and “holding on” that characterizes early toilet training. Like the first stage, balance is what is essential. While a fixation on “holding on” can lead to a pathological orientation (“to have and to hold”) that is ultimately destructive; “letting go” could as well “turn into inimical letting loose of destructive forces, or it can become a ‘to let pass’ or ‘to let be.’”<sup>244</sup> It is during this stage the child learns to first distinguish between an “I” and a “you”; “yours” and “mine”; identifies categories of “good” and “bad”; “right” and “wrong”.<sup>245</sup> Note that though Erikson identifies the

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<sup>243</sup> Erick Erickson, *Childhood and Society*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (New York: Norton, 1963), p. 249; See also Richard Evans and Erik Erikson, *Dialogue with Erikson* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 15ff. Mistrust is also important.

<sup>244</sup> Erick Erickson, *Identity*, *Ibid.* p. 109

<sup>245</sup> Erik Erikson, “Life Cycle,” *Op. Cit.* p. 288

development of a *sense of autonomy* with “right” and “wrong”, he does not directly link it with formation of conscience. However, keeping in mind the integral nature of the life cycle he analyzes explains it.

He presents the third stage (Initiative vs. guilt) as the time when conscience formation is “firmly established” with the development of a “sense of guilt” as the child begins to hear an “inner voice” that puts brakes on his/her exuberant sense of freedom and resultant excesses of initiative. So conscience is the “governor of initiative” that emerges as a result of a split in the self in its struggle to balance infantile self-indulgence and social mechanisms of control calling him to “self-observation, self-guidance, and self-punishment.”<sup>246</sup> He holds this “inner voice” as the “ontogenetic cornerstone of morality,” but one that needs careful development for it has a high tendency to become deformed or “maimed” in the child by excessive obedience or “deep resentment” should the parent fail to live up to the values he/she has made the child internalize.

The **fourth stage** (industry vs. inferiority) affords the child the opportunity to learn how to be industrious by careful use of tools. The child learns from older kids both at home and at school. This marks the stage of social responsibility as the child learns to complete a task unhindered by feelings of inferiority (resulting from mistakes made). This “competence” is the basis for social cooperation. The **fifth stage** (identity vs. role diffusion) is the last stage before young adulthood, a stage marked by rapid physiological changes. Here the adolescent undergoes identity crisis in an effort to understand the self in the light of the past and future. It is a psycho-social struggle to find and/or integrate oneself within the new context - the larger segment of society. The sense of ego identity here is a certain “confidence” that one is the same self as

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<sup>246</sup> Erikson, *Childhood and Society, Op. Cit.*, p. 256.

witnessed in the past stages of development and is taken to be the same by others. This search for identity is characterized by an “ideological experimentation” as he/she seeks for an “inner coherence” via some form of durable values. The core virtue of this period is *fidelity* – the capacity to fulfill promises made to one’s friends despite the inadequacies found in value systems of one’s society.<sup>247</sup>

The other three stages (6-8) are adult developments. Therefore, they consolidate the gains of previous stages. He conceives “intimacy” as a certain form of “shared identity” - the capacity to integrate in oneself one of the paradoxes of life where one experiences “finding oneself as one loses oneself, in another.”<sup>248</sup> It is the “transformation” of the love one had received (during childhood) into that which one gives. It is the evolution of self-transcendence as the individual redefines “self-identity” to include others. The distortion of this stage is “isolation” that could find expression in form of evolving a “joint selfishness in the services of some territoriality”<sup>249</sup> such that one is willing to “repudiate, isolate, and if necessary, destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one’s own.”<sup>250</sup> This corruption of love has lasting implications.

At the seventh stage, the young adult already has a growing sense of maturity and responsibility. One is dependable for a host of generative initiatives: “children, products, ideas, and works of art.” Though emphasis here is placed on providing and guiding one’s progeny,

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<sup>247</sup> Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility*, Op. Cit. p. 125

<sup>248</sup> Erikson, *Ibid*, p. 128

<sup>249</sup> Erikson, *Ibid*. p.130

<sup>250</sup> Erikson, *Identity, Op. Cit*, p. 136

Erikson notes motherless women can fulfill their generative potentials by taking care of other women's children.<sup>251</sup> The virtue that this stage fosters is "care". He says, "I use 'care' in a sense which includes 'to care to do' something, to 'care for' somebody or something, to 'take care of' that which needs protection and attention, and 'to take care not to' do something destructive."<sup>252</sup>

The dystonic component of generativity is stagnation, self-absorption, and self-indulgence.

Finally, the eighth stage affords one the opportunity to evolve *integrity* or else *despair*. It is the capacity to accept oneself and life's experiences with dignity or else become bitter, cynical, or resentful. The virtue inherent in this stage is wisdom.

Erikson identifies three distinct levels of ethical development: "moral learning" (of childhood), "ideological experimentation" (during adolescence), and "ethical consolidation" (of adulthood).<sup>253</sup> He therefore distinguishes between "morals" and "ethics" by identifying "moral learning" with "adolescent experimentation" as infantile – a moral sense that is the result of fear or threat; and considers "ethics" as the "task of adults" since they are products of reflection rather than a largely unconscious fear emanating from the superego. He says:

I would propose that we consider moral rules of conduct to be based on a fear of threats to be forestalled. These may be outer threats of abandonment, punishment, and public exposure, or a threatening inner sense of guilt, of shame, or isolation. In either case, the rationale for obeying a rule may not be too clear; it is the threat that counts. In contrast, I would consider ethical rules to be based on ideals to be striven for with a high degree of rational assent and with a ready consent to formulated good, a definition of perfection, and some promise of self-realization.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Evans Richards and Erik Erikson, *Dialogue with Erikson, Op. Cit.*, pp. 51-2

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.* p. 53

<sup>253</sup> Erickson, *Life History and the Historical Moment* (New York: Norton, 1975), p. 206 (E. Erikson 1975)

<sup>254</sup> Erik Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility, ibid.* p. 222

Erikson however considers each stage of moral development as critical to what the other becomes. In other words, he has an integral view of moral and/or ethical development.

*Conscience formation therefore begins at the very first stage in the process but only finds full expression in the third stage with the formation of the sense of guilt.* It comes to maturity not in the adolescent formation but in the adult stage with the realization of ethical orientation where the individual performs ethical acts not based on threats (or a sense of inner guilt) but of ideals. One way to interpret this is to make sharp bifurcation between morals and ethics – morals linking *conscience* formation and ethics to *ego ideal*. Another is to see moral and conscience development as integral to ethical development. Therefore, a child maladapted in any stage of the process will fail to develop the necessary strengths and/or “virtues” proper to that stage thereby effectively disrupting or distorting the proper formation of conscience and ultimately arresting his/her proper ethical development. We consider this latter view as closer to experience.

An integral view of moral formation inclusive of conscience formation allows a retrieval of conscience with its positive aspects than identifying its presence or formation solely from the capacity to feel guilt. Such positive aspects as we find in the moral formation of the child (as we find in Erikson’s polarities) are often neglected in their bearings on conscience formation precisely because we have overtime gotten used to identifying conscience solely with guilt. But this guilt is only one aspect of its functionality. The other is self-transcendence the development of which we already see in its nascent form in the first stage (trust/mistrust) as the child decodes the loving relationship its shares with its mother. Before our final synthesis, let us examine two more classical representative psycho-moral theorists: Piaget and Kohlberg who are both cognitive structuralists that share this integral view.

**2.1.4 Jean Piaget (1896-1980)** is another psycho-moral development theorist that provides us insight about human moral evolution. Like Freud and Erikson, he considers childhood development as key to understanding how we develop morals. He holds that cognitive and moral developments proceed together. He provides us with four principal stages of cognitive development: 1. *Sensorimotor period* (0-2) is characterized by basic reflex actions that progresses to basic mental representation and manipulation of objects (identifies six sub-stages). 2. *Preoperational period* (2-7) the child primarily concerned with self and depends on perception of objects than logic (abstraction) in solving problems but would gradually progress to more intuitive thinking (from age 5-7). 3. *Concrete operations period* (7-11) the child performs logical mental “operations” but on perceptible or imagined “concrete objects”. 4. *Formal Operations period* (11-15) is when the child has a fully functional mind capable of abstract thinking and no longer limited to objects, sights and sounds. Experience over the years would continue to fill the gaps in mental conceptualizations to enable the individual develop greater capacity for even more complex ideas.

We have noted above that Piaget holds that cognitive and moral developments proceed together. To understand the nature of this integral development one needs to grasp how he conceives the mental architecture. He views this as having three parts: “cognitive structures, schemes, and operating mechanisms.”<sup>255</sup> Cognitive structures are the templates or “perceptual capacities” for interpreting the world. They change from one stage to another in predictable patterns for all children. *Schemes* are mechanisms of adaptation that people evolve in response to their changing situations. The reason for thought and action is to enable this adaptation to its

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<sup>255</sup> R. Murray Thomas, *Moral Development, Op. Cit.*, p. 54

optimal value. The “grasping” movements of the child, the concept of “addition,” and “abiding by the rules” are different forms of schemes the child develops at different stages of its development.<sup>256</sup> Operating mechanisms are more primary categories from which schemes emerged. Piaget identifies *assimilation* and *accommodation* as the primary mechanisms that are functional throughout life. Assimilation is a process of interpreting a new experience in the light of a scheme (an existing mental pattern) thereby modifying that new experience to suit his mental mode. When the experience does not match an existing scheme, an existing scheme is altered or a new one created. This is “accommodation”.<sup>257</sup> The whole of life is one of either assimilation or accommodation at one time or the other.

In the light of the above, Piaget conceives moral development as integral to cognitive development because it involves the application of mental process to bear on moral matters. In his view morality develops from feelings of *respect* for authority figures (adults) that made rules, and *sympathy* for peers that is at the root of all collaboration. Therefore, moral development has a basic social locus, evolving from a heteronymous to an autonomous standpoint. He explains:

We found that the purely individual elements of morality could be traced either to the feeling of respect felt by the younger for the older children, which explained the genesis of conscience and duty, or to the feelings of sympathy felt by the child for those around him, which made cooperation possible. Instinctive tendencies, together with others more or less directly connected with them, are thus a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the formation of morality. Morality presupposes the existence of rules which transcend the individual, and these rules could only develop through contact with other people. Thus the fundamental conceptions of childish morality consist of those imposed by the adult and of those born of collaboration between children themselves. In both cases, that is to say, whether the child's moral judgments are

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<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.* p. 55

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 55-6



heteronomous or autonomous, accepted under pressure or worked out in freedom, this morality is social, and on this point Durkheim is unquestionably right.<sup>258</sup>

Piaget is affirming here with Durkheim the social nature of morality which we already saw in Adler and Erikson above. However, unlike Durkheim, he admits that youths move beyond heteronomous morality based on constraints or fear (respect for authority figures) as they learn to tap into *innate potentialities* of “mutual respect” for peers and therefore develop an autonomous morality based on social sympathy. This happens as soon as the adolescent is able to overcome egocentrism. So he considers “decentering” (self-transcendence) at the roots of all morality.<sup>259</sup>

As expected, Piaget’s claims have been challenged extensively.<sup>260</sup> The essence of the critique to Piaget’s claims is that he oversimplified the complex phenomenon of moral reasoning.<sup>261</sup> Apart from the foregoing, three relevant points for this research are: firstly his view that conscience originates from “feelings” of respect (or even the latter social sympathy). It is important to keep this in mind given that Piaget is considered essentially as a cognitive model

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<sup>258</sup> Jean Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1932), p. 344. In another section Piaget writes: “Unilateral respect, the source of the absolute command, taken literally, yields the place to mutual respect, the source of moral understanding. We can, indeed, distinguish three stages in this progress. In the first stage, a lie is wrong because it is an object of punishment; if the punishment were removed, it would be allowed. Then a lie becomes something that is wrong in itself and would remain so even if the punishment were removed. Finally, a lie is wrong because it is in conflict with mutual trust and affection. Thus the consciousness of lying gradually becomes interiorized and the hypothesis may be hazarded that it does so under the influence of cooperation. If we attribute the advance to the child’s intelligence alone, which is constantly improving his understanding of what he originally took in a purely realistic sense, we are only shifting the question. For how does psychological intelligence advance with age if not by means of increased cooperation? Cooperation, of course, presupposes intelligence, but this circular relation is perfectly natural: *Intelligence animates cooperation and yet needs this social instrument for its own formation.*” *Ibid*, p. 168 Emphasis is ours.

<sup>259</sup> See John M. Rich and J. L. DeVitis, *Theories of Moral Development, Op. Cit.*, p. 49

<sup>260</sup> See Hugh Rosen, *The Development of Sociomoral Knowledge: A Cognitive-Structural Approach* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 35-8; Robert Hogan, “Moral Conduct and Moral Character: A Psychological Perspective,” in *Psychological Bulletin* (1973): 79-227

<sup>261</sup> See William Kay, *Moral Development* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), pp. 150, 172

theorist. Much of the critique of Piaget's model focuses on his claim that there exists an innate "cognitive structures" that are invariant and culturally universal. The stress is on "cognition" at the detriment of "feeling" (affect). This research considers "feeling" as a critical component of conscience and in fact at the roots of the moral sense. It is a documented fact that the absence of this "feeling" component that distinguishes the psychopath from normal people (see chapter One). *Instead of the cognitive aspect, it is the "feeling" aspect that makes them conscienceless.* Therefore, a retrieval of the notion of conscience needs to sufficiently integrate this aspect.

Secondly, without detriment to the foregoing, that he integrates cognitive and moral development is significant for the notion of conscience we admit, as we noted above. Thirdly, the fact that he considers instinctive childish tendencies as necessary but insufficient for the formation of morality is a significant critique of Freud in particular and opens up the possibility to argue that conscience rather than being conceived as a static quality evolves in its formation as the child matures from a morality of constraint to one of autonomy. Conscience does not only look backwards (at punishments) but also gazes at the future possibilities – the ideal self in an ideal community. It is the combination of the two that enable it to make present judgments. Therefore, without the positive aspect in the development of conscience, it becomes at best an effort in reductionism. Perhaps Freud's insufficient attention to the significant role of the larger social environment beyond the family as pivotal to the development of the cognitive and moral apparatus of the growing child and adolescent played a part in his conclusions. Questions that Piaget's theory raises for us are: What are the roots and role of "moral feelings?" Are logical abilities more influential than experiential ones for moral growth? How significant is

“perception” (*peer* perception or otherwise) in influencing moral behavior? Lawrence Kohlberg who develops further Piaget’s model might provide some insight to some of these questions.

**2.1.5 Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1987):** Kohlberg, who claims that his theory is both psychological and philosophical, holds that moral development passes through invariant stages that have universal cultural application. His major influences are Dewey and Piaget. He postulates that six developmental stages that yield three moral levels of developments: pre-conventional, Conventional, and post-conventional levels (with two succeeding stages proportionate to one moral stage respectively). At the pre-conventional level (stages 1 and 2), rules are obeyed merely to avoid punishment and conformity is directly related to rewards. The conventional level (stages 3 and 4) the agent conforms to social rules (as a duty he owes the group) in order to gain approval of the “in group” and therefore right behavior is elicited based on the agent’s *perception* (of approval or disapproval) of his/her social group (see “perception of moral atmosphere” later in this chapter). The post-conventional level (stages 5 and 6) is characterized by autonomy for the agent evolves a subjective principle of value for moral choices. Duties are therefore conceived no longer on the basis of approval but as obligations that are mutually binding based on equality of rights. He argues that stage six of the post-conventional level involves the application of principles of conscience that are invariable and universal. These principles are rather more abstracted (like the “Golden rule” or the “categorical imperative” of Kant) than concrete (like the *Ten commandments*).<sup>262</sup>In his view, moral maturity is the capacity to make moral judgments based on one’s own convictions (principles).

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<sup>262</sup> For the foregoing, see John M. Rich and J. L. DeVitis, *Theories of Moral Development, Op. Cit.*, pp. 88-9

Kohlberg holds that childhood moral development is within the pre-conventional level and majority of adults remain all their lives in stages 3 and 4 of the conventional level. He contends that only a few percentage of adults (20-25 percent) reach the post-conventional level of moral reasoning and even less arrive at stage 6 (5-10 percent).<sup>263</sup> Evidently, Kohlberg affirms with Piaget that children tend to conform to rules based on punishments and rewards (good or bad outcomes). According to him:

Piaget is correct in assuming a culturally universal age development of a sense of justice, involving progressive concern for the needs and feelings of others and elaborated conceptions of reciprocity and equality. As this sense of justice develops, however, it reinforces respect for authority and for the rules of adult society; it also reinforces more informal peer norms, since adult institutions have underpinnings of reciprocity, equality of treatment, service to human needs, etc.<sup>264</sup>

He however rejects Piaget's assumption that there is a universally applicable shift from an ethic of constraint (based on fear and respect for adult authority) to one of peer loyalty; a shift from a sense of justice based on conformity to one of democratic equality. He thinks there is no relevant data to justify this position.<sup>265</sup>

Kohlberg argues that these cognitive stages and the moral levels integral to them succeed each other and therefore cannot be skipped over. While it often happens that an adult cognitive and moral developments are arrested in stage 4 without going to stages 5-6, no one arrives at the latter stages without going through the earlier one (1-2, 3-4). These stages proceed in an

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<sup>263</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>264</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg, "Moral Development," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 17 vols. (New York: Macmillan Press, 1968), pp. 488-489

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid*

“invariant developmental sequence.” Accordingly, moral development, which progresses in tandem with cognitive maturation, essentially involves providing the rationale for moral choices. For example, at Stage 1, the reason *in conscience* for right behavior is to “avoid punishment,” while for someone in stage 6 it is to avoid “self-condemnation.” Therefore, from stages 1 through 6, there is a progressive maturation, differentiation, and integration of higher and more universalized values for moral decisions. While there is value confusion at lowest levels of development, the highest levels are marked by greater value differentiation not only in terms of social rules but also characterized by a more delineated principles of choice that appeal to “logical universality and consistency.”<sup>266</sup>

He considers these progressions as not merely cognitive but that they have a moral aspect as well – and they constitute his theory of conscience development. He however does not lump cognitive and moral development together. In other words, he considers cognitive maturity as a necessary but not a sufficient condition for moral maturity.<sup>267</sup> This implies that while someone in stage four might be cognitively mature but may not be able to attain high levels of principled decisions of conscience of post conventional level of moral development. Conversely, someone in stage 6 cannot get there without an equivalent cognitive maturity. In this way he is able to avoid the critique that persons of high cognitive ability are found to be deficient in high moral principle. He ultimately considers “judgments of principle” as moral judgments that are based on an impartial (impersonal or objective) universal concept of justice. While stage 5 is an

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<sup>266</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg, “Education for Justice: A Modern Statement of the Platonic View” in Nancy F. Sizer and Theodore R. Sizer (eds.), *Moral Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 72

<sup>267</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan, “The Adolescent as a Philosopher: The Discovery of the Self in a Post-conventional World.” *Daedalus* 100 (Fall 1971): 1071

orientation to internal decisions of conscience (with regard to justice and fairness) it admits some elements of vagueness and ambiguity as to its universality, but stage six is unambiguous, logically comprehensive, universal and consistent.

The immediate concern for our research with Kohlberg's theory of moral development is the inherent difficulty in differentiating the role of conscience in influencing moral behavior. It would have made a significant difference if this is easily attainable given that his theory is more readily applicable to adults than the other theories of development reviewed here. If cognitive maturity does not necessarily lead to principled decisions of conscience, what other helps are needed? His answer here is lame: "experience of sustained responsibility for the welfare of others and the experience of irreversible choice...."<sup>268</sup> Obviously, "experience" is neither a tangible quantity nor a predictable quality even if it is measurable. And for our purposes, his answer suggests circularity given that "sustained responsibility for the welfare of others" is what we are trying to understand how conscience influences that possibility.

However, he does help us confirm that moral development consists in a progressive weaning of interests from the self towards the larger whole. It is obvious from his theory that a more developed conscience leads one to act more responsibly by making more principled decisions that is attentive to justice and fairness in its widest conceptualizations even if these run the risk of abuses (like zealotry, fundamentalism) as Kenneth Keniston has rightly observed.<sup>269</sup> Moreover, though a developed cognitive ability does not necessarily imply moral maturity, but it

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<sup>268</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg, "Continuities in Childhood and Adult Moral Development Revisited" in P. B. Baltes and K. Warner Schaie (eds.), *Life-Span Developmental Psychology: Personality and Socialization* (New York: Academic Press, 1973), p. 195

<sup>269</sup> Kenneth Keniston, "Moral Development, Youthful Activism, and Modern Society," *The Critic*, September-October (1969):22-23

is even worse to arrest or delete the possibility of such moral progression. Is it not valid then to argue that efforts to arrest or destroy the formation of conscience translate, by Kohlberg's scheme, to emasculating moral development in all its forms?

More importantly, Kohlberg's theory is essentially focused on cognitive ability such that the dimensions of emotion, "moral sensitivity to interpersonal and social complexities, intuitive judgments, moral dispositions, and character as the basis of action" are all ignored.<sup>270</sup> William Spohn considers the cognitive developmental theories (of Piaget and Kohlberg) were based on "flawed empirical and philosophical assumptions."<sup>271</sup> Other empirical evidence indicates that children act sometimes from motive other than punishment or rewards; infants reveal "rudimentary empathy," while two year olds are aware of rules.<sup>272</sup> Moreover, research shows mixed responses: children mix responses from 2 and 3, and adults mix 3 and 4 refuting the "hard stages" Kohlberg claims. He also notes a philosophical difficulty inherent in universalizing particular moral encounters. Gilligan's hypothesis of distinctive gender differences in moral reasoning (justice/care dyad) is not true to fact.<sup>273</sup> We shall now proceed to a more general critique of the psychological theories of moral developmental that pays attention only to those aspects that we have not touched in our individual critiques of each model above.

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<sup>270</sup> William Spohn, "Conscience and Moral Development," in *Conscience: Readings in Moral Theology*, 14<sub>2</sub> ed., Charles Curran (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), p.138

<sup>271</sup> Spohn, *ibid* He cites Martin L. Hoffman, 'Empathy, Role-taking, Guilt, and Development of Altruistic Motives,' in *Moral Development and Behavior*, ed. Thomas Lickona (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1976), 120-30; Owen Flanagan, *Varieties of Moral Personality: Ethics and Psychological Realism* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1991) 187.

<sup>272</sup> Spohn, *Ibid*

<sup>273</sup> Spohn, *Ibid*

### 2.1.6. A General Critique of Psychological Theories of Moral Development

We have examined above the most prominent of moral development theorists and offered some critique along with our analysis. This section attempts a more generalized critique aimed at highlighting some important aspects of these theories and to underscore critical insights of other theories of development that cannot be accommodated here due to space. A good way to start is using other theories of development as critical tools. Social learning theorists who are more interested in the *process* than in *content* of moral development insist that precepts and values are relative to each given culture based on a “pragmatic sense” of the importance (over time) of such values or precepts. Therefore, they consider the universalizing of values and the claim of “hard stages” as overstating the facts. Arthur W. Chickering defines “values” as “standards by which behavior is evaluated.”<sup>274</sup> Social learning theorists argue that each community determines what constitutes “values” for them based on their relative merit or other utilitarian considerations. Moral values are either individual or shared. When shared, they are codified into law or remain informal as customs and traditions. This insight is critical for an appreciation of the uniqueness of African ethical orientation we shall be encountering throughout this study.

Albert Bandura, a prominent social learning theorist, criticizes cognitive structuralists (as we find in Piaget and Kohlberg models above) for ignoring the discrepancy that exists between high moral reasoning and actual behavior.<sup>275</sup> His critical assessment of psychoanalytic approach argues that “it is more like a belief conversion than a self-discovery process” since “each

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<sup>274</sup> Arthur W. Chickering, *Education and Identity* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969), p. 123

<sup>275</sup> See J. H. Kupfersmid and D. M. Wonderly, “Moral Maturity and Behavior: Failure to find a Link,” in *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 9, 249-262.



psychodynamic approach has its favorite set of inner causes and its own preferred brand of insight” that are “readily confirmed in self-validating interviews by offering suggestive interpretations” and selective reinforcements of clients observations to align with chosen beliefs.<sup>276</sup> While this critique questions all the claims of the development theories above it also leaves room for doubt even for social learning theories themselves but only so long as they employ interviews as technique. Bandura argues further:

In the social learning view, people are neither driven by inner forces nor buffeted by environmental stimuli. Rather, psychological functioning is explained in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction of personal and environmental determinants. Within this approach, symbolic, vicarious, and self-regulatory processes assume a prominent role. Psychological theories have traditionally assumed that learning can occur only by performing responses and experience their effects. In actuality, *virtually all learning phenomena resulting from direct experience occur on a vicarious basis by observing other people’s behavior and its consequences for them.* The capacity to learn by observation enables people to acquire large, integrated patterns of behavior without having to form them gradually by tedious trial and error.<sup>277</sup>

We prefer a middle position that admits the influence of *internal* and *external* factors (or forces) in behavior. The above critique however highlights an aspect - the “vicarious” nature of learning behavior (we *learn* “how to behave” from observing others). This insight helps our research for it underscores the effect of people’s action (or inaction) on other people’s moral

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<sup>276</sup> Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1977), p. 5

<sup>277</sup> Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*, pp. 11-12

development and behavior. It also allows us to appreciate more the role of “consequences” as moral “reinforcement” (an “effective means of regulating behavior that has been earned).”<sup>278</sup> Jane Loevinger would further argue that “externally applied consequences create the contents of conscience.”<sup>279</sup> Social learning theorists adopt a “cognitive interactionist perspective” in assessing moral phenomena. Therefore they could argue that “moral thought and affective self-reactions, moral conduct, and environmental factors all operate as interacting determinants that influence each other bidirectionally.”<sup>280</sup> This implies that social learning theory recognizes the significance of “affect” or *emotions* on behavior to a degree we do not find in the psychological models reviewed above.

Perhaps one of Freud’s greatest achievements is helping us to appreciate the depth and power of the unconscious mind in motivating behavior. Part of the critical component of the unconscious is *memory* (short and long term). R. M. Thomas includes these as part of memory: “needs/drives and goals, facts and concepts, causal relations, moral values, mental processes, and the moral self.”<sup>281</sup> Though we affirm that conscience is a *capacity* and/or a *process* rather than a faculty, yet we equally affirm that like “drives,” its influence on behavior is not limited merely to the conscious moral choices but to deeper unconscious motives that shape the contours of our life stance. Our conscience shapes who we *are* or who we *become* in deeper ways than the

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<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.* p. 22

<sup>279</sup> Jane Loevinger, *Paradigms of Personality* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1987), p. 158

<sup>280</sup> Albert Bandura, “Social Cognitive Theory of moral thought and action” in W.M. Kurtines and J. L. Gewirtz (eds.), *Handbook of Moral Behavior and Development: Vol.1: Theory*. (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum), p. 45 cited by R. Murray Thomas, *Moral Development Theories, Op. Cit.* p. 80

<sup>281</sup> Thomas, *ibid.* p. 138 He argues that these range from the “lucidly conscious to the deeply unconscious.”

surface decisions of everyday life. These surface decisions are like trails that reveal only partly the phenomenon it represents.

We have noted that theologically conscience reproves and approves. The distinctions Freud creates between conscience and ego-ideal can be considered as two aspects of the same reality of conscience. In this way, theology corrects and complements psychological pre-suppositions. It also could help reconstruct Freud's wholly negative view of conscience such that instead of reading the social angst (that gives rise to conscience) as "repression" inverts to "elevation" because it is a *symbolic moment* in the growth of the individual. This "symbolic moment" is experienced in "growth" at all levels: physiologically (especially the effort towards bipedalism is significant for the concept of elevation), cognitively, emotionally, morally, and eventually, spiritually. The real "repression" would be a reverse situation whereby the id is given a free-reign such that the potentialities for social relationships and particularly the capacity for selflessness (or altruism) and empathy become stifled. Experimental data shows that narcissism has links to overindulging children, and Robert Shaw, among others, has noted the grave dangers of such overindulgence. Such children think "the world is there as his satisfaction system that keeps doing whatever they want."<sup>282</sup> This is actually the fundamental critique of Adler to Freud. His individual Psychology is an expression of this concern about pampering children to the point it threatens the development of proper "social interests".

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<sup>282</sup> Bruce Ward, "Dealing with Brats," Interview with Dr Robert Shaw, "The Citizen's Weekly," Ottawa Citizen, February 8, 2004 edition. See also Robert Shaw, *The Epidemic: The Rot of American Culture, Absentee and Permissive Parenting, and the Resultant Plague of Joyless, Selfish Children* (New York: Regan Books, 2004). (Shaw 2004)

Erikson considers all moral conduct based on fear, guilt, shame, punishment, as infantile. This position is left to an open debate and African Ethics falls within this circumscription. We particularly note the integrality of the stages of moral formation as represented in Erikson – each stage melds into the other. Conscience formation begins in early stages but find fuller expression at higher stages (3) and ultimate maturity later in life (when wisdom and integrity becomes priority). Part of his insight for us is the need to develop trust (and intimacy) or mistrust (and isolation). If trust and intimacy, one finds self by losing oneself in others. If otherwise, “joint selfishness in the service of some territoriality” becomes a dangerous pastime. This is a serious caveat that this research will consider in the next chapters because we consider its import has universal application. Since we cannot possibly exhaust the critique of these models let us now turn to theological understanding of conscience.

## 2.2.0 PART TWO: THEOLOGICAL VIEWS OF CONSCIENCE

Our overview and critique of representative theories of moral development in the last segment leads us to now consider the theological understanding of the notion of conscience with particular emphasis on the Catholic moral tradition. Space will not allow us an historical overview of the development of this concept (for this see footnote),<sup>283</sup> but we will attempt in the following segment to examine some representative authors on this theme with a particular emphasis on Thomas Aquinas whose conceptualization remains central to the Church’s understanding of the concept.

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<sup>283</sup>For resources on the biblical, historical, and philosophical views on Conscience see: Eric D’Arcy, *Conscience and Its Right to Freedom* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961); Philippe Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience* (New York: Desclee, 1968); Eric Mount, *Conscience and Responsibility* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1969); John Donnelly and Leonard Lyons, eds., *Conscience* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1973); Basil Mitchell, *Morality: Religious and Secular, The Dilemma of the Traditional Conscience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); John Callaghan, *Time Past, Time Future: An Historical Study of Catholic Moral Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990).

To be able to provide a wider perspective on the subject, we shall incorporate a cross section of views on conscience from contemporary theologians, both traditionalist and revisionists. We shall first give a general overview of the problematic surrounding the nature of Conscience as found in the Church's most recent documents and proceed to examine how Aquinas in particular views Conscience. Other significant perspectives will be accommodated to help underscore the difficulty inherent in certain aspects that impinge on our theme. Given that our interest in conscience is only functional – to help us examine its influence on human behavior, we shall therefore incorporate themes that fulfill this goal. In this regard, the relation of conscience to “feelings,” to “shame” and “guilt” and to the “perception of moral atmosphere” will be explored. Finally, we will present an overview of African thoughts on Conscience that links us to the next chapter on the role of the moral community in conscience formation.

### 2.2.1 An Overview of Catholic Traditional View of Conscience

A good place to seek for current hierarchical traditional Catholic understanding of conscience is Vatican II document (*Gaudium et Spes*)<sup>284</sup> and proceed to its hermeneutical application in *New Catechism* of the Catholic Church (CCC) and *Veritatis Splendor*<sup>285</sup> which are two most recent relevant documents for understanding conscience that John Paul II left in the annals of Catholic moral tradition. The council fathers dedicated the first chapter of *Gaudium et Spes* to the examination of “The Dignity of the Human Person.” This involved seeking for an understanding of the “essential nature” of man in whom this “dignity” reposes. In article 12 the

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<sup>284</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 16, in *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed., Austin Flannery (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1987), p. 903.

<sup>285</sup> John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), p.3 or [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_06081993\\_veritatis-splendor\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor_en.html)

fathers identified this dignity of man in his being “created to God’s image” which finds expression in his intellectual nature and finds its perfection in “wisdom” that draws him to seek and love “the truth and the good.”<sup>286</sup> Then in article 16 the document dwells on the “Dignity of Moral Conscience.” It asserts:

Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and avoid evil, tells him inwardly at the right moment: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God. His dignity lies in observing this law, and by it he will be judged. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths.<sup>287</sup>

Even though the Council fathers did not articulate for us a clear definition of conscience, they however provided us with the essential ingredients of a descriptive understanding of it as well as leaving traces of the inherently difficult relationship it has with “objective moral standards” (or law). The ambiguity emerging from the above functional description is that it leaves one wondering how conscience and law are distinguished. If conscience is the “voice” of objective divine law speaking in man’s depths, then how do we distinguish the “objectivity” of this law from the “subjectivity” of conscience that adheres to it? What is the warrant for the “objectivity” of this law since it is only as evident as it appears “subjectively” to the moral agent? This is the perennial moral problem associated with conscience. This complexity is evidently the function of human freedom. And the council fathers rightly affirmed that “it’s only in freedom that man can turn himself to what is good.”<sup>288</sup> Hence, to affirm human freedom is to affirm that a clear logical distinction exists between the objective moral law and both the

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<sup>286</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 12, 14.

<sup>287</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 16.

<sup>288</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 17.

subjective “awareness” of that law and the equally subjective “response” to it. These latter two are not to be identified. But which of them is conscience? Is it possible to affirm that both subjective “awareness” and “response” are integral parts of conscience? Whatever the answer should be it is at least implied that the dignity of conscience consists in being the “voice” that “echoes” in the human heart – the deepest guide to human moral life. And human dignity consists essentially in following it.

The Council fathers revealed another aspect of the problem. In *Dignitatis Humanae*, a document dedicated to religious freedom, they affirmed both the authority of conscience and the divine law as the ultimate moral norm:

[T]he highest norm of human life is the divine law itself – eternal, objective and universal, by which God orders, directs and governs the whole world and the ways of the human community according to a plan conceived in his wisdom and love....It is through his conscience that man sees and recognizes the demands of the divine law. He is bound to follow this conscience faithfully in all his activity so that he may come to God, who is his last end. Therefore he must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters.<sup>289</sup>

The question this seems to raise, as we shall see in later arguments, is whether by affirming together the absolute authority of the divine law (as the objective moral norm) and the absolute authority of conscience (as the subjective moral norm) the council has contradicted itself? There will not be any reason to pursue this question if not that a difficulty already exists in distinguishing conscience from law. What compounds the problem further is the fact that though this objective “divine law” is essentially *interiorly* grasped, it also has an *exterior* manifestation

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<sup>289</sup> *Dignitatis Humanae*, 3, in *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, ed., Austin Flannery (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1987), pp. 801-802.

in the contents of Revelation and the interpretative teachings of the Church Magisterium. The Catechism presents us with a clearer view:

Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed. In all he says and does, man is obliged to follow faithfully what he knows to be just and right. It is by the judgment of conscience that man perceives and recognizes the prescriptions of the divine law.<sup>290</sup>

Here we have a descriptive definition of what conscience is through the role it plays. By stating that conscience is a “*judgment* of reason,” the Catechism made an advance over the Vatican II documents. By this singular claim, it has differentiated conscience from law, for judgment follows law, and is about law.

Given our analysis of psychological perspectives on moral development above, it is pertinent to ask how conscience mediates or grasps this law. Freud informs us that it is the voice of the *superego* (internalized parental authority). So, is it a repressed parental inhibitions or a personal law? If it is not, then who made this law? This gets a bit complicated when the *Catechism* itself quotes **John Newman** who affirmed that “conscience is a law of the mind.”<sup>291</sup> Even though Newman did clarify some of the ambiguity in his claim by affirming further that “it is a messenger of him, who both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by his representatives,” yet there remains an openness to “radically personalize” this law as differentiated from its cognitive subjectivity (being “known” by the individual person). Hence the Catechism’s clarification that conscience is a “*witness* to the authority of truth in

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<sup>290</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1778 (Missouri: Ligouri Publications, 1994), p. 438.

<sup>291</sup> John Newman, “Letter to the Duke of Norfolk,” V, in *Certain Difficulties felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching II* (London: Longmans Green, 1885), p.248.



reference to the Supreme Good”<sup>292</sup> or Newman’s idea of divine “messenger” becomes useful in showing that the dignity of conscience does not consist so much in being a law unto itself as in being a “witness” to the divine law. However, given the subjective nature of this knowledge of the divine law, another problem emerges: Who determines what this law is? Here we return full circle to the moral dilemma of conscience and law, the subjective knowledge of law and its objective component (shared externally with others). We must note again that our interest in this research is not so much finding answers to the questions of the “content” of conscience as to the sources of its inhibitions in influencing our actions. But to underscore the problematic relating to understanding its nature it does help to explore further the theme of conscience and law.

In *Veritatis Splendor*, John Paul II dedicated many pages to explaining the relationship between conscience and law. He affirms, *inter alia*, the following:

*The moral law [that conscience mediates] has its origin in God and always finds its source in him: at the same time, by virtue of natural reason, which derives from divine wisdom, it is a properly human law.*<sup>293</sup>

The introduction of “natural reason” and “human law” takes us further into the debate but should not hinder our quest for the core issue: to clarify the relationship between the subjective and objective components of law that conscience mediates. Suffice it to say for now that “conscience” is a function of practical reason in the human intellect. As it is, the assertion above compounds the tension between divine law and the autonomy of reason and/or conscience. In a further effort to douse this tension, he elaborates:

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<sup>292</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no., 1777.

<sup>293</sup> John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, art. 40 (Vatican: Lebraria Editrice Vaticana, 1993), p. 63, or [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_06081993\\_veritatis-splendor\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor_en.html)

The rightful autonomy of the practical reason means that man possesses in himself *his own law*, received from the Creator. Nevertheless, the autonomy of reason cannot mean that reason itself creates values and moral norms.<sup>294</sup>

The affirmation and denial of the autonomy of reason in the above text only underscores the complexity of explicating this relationship between the objective law and subjective human reason that possesses it. The document hinged the inability of an autonomous reason to create its own law on the fact that it is a custodian of eternal divine law. It became necessary then to identify this “objective, eternal, and universal law” with “natural law” as the “human expression” of it.<sup>295</sup> Aquinas provided the most lucid articulation of this idea and the Church adopted it. We shall be examining his view on conscience in greater detail later. But note here what he says:

Among all others, the rational creature is subject to divine providence in the most excellent way, insofar as it partakes of a share of providence, being provident both for itself and for others. Thus it has a *natural inclination* to its proper act and end. This *participation* of the eternal law in the rational creature is called natural law.<sup>296</sup>

So, natural law is the human “participation” in the eternal law that God “engraved” in the very *nature* of humanity such that it is “properly a *human law*.” That human reason knows this law is evident in the testimony of conscience. As *Veritatis Splendor* affirms, “it is none other human reason itself which commands us to do good and counsels us not to sin.”<sup>297</sup>

Perhaps it could be argued that this identification of the “objective” *eternal law* with *natural law* that then finds expression through human reason both resolves and compounds the problem. It resolves the problem by establishing the basis for the autonomy of reason and/or

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<sup>294</sup> *Veritatis Splendor*, 40.

<sup>295</sup> *Veritatis Splendor*, 43.

<sup>296</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *S. T. I-II*, q. 91, a. 2.

<sup>297</sup> *Veritatis Splendor*, 43.

conscience. Paradoxically, the establishment of the autonomy of reason compounds the problem because it now becomes more difficult to bring reason to renounce this autonomy, nor should it! Though the idea of “participation” is useful in clarifying the manner of relationship between the eternal reason and human reason (or the eternal law and human law), it nonetheless fails to solve the problem. It is possible that each person could follow personal whims and still lay claim to “participating” in the divine law precisely because there is no way to verify the truth of natural law, not in terms of first practical principles that are self-evident, but secondary principles deduced from it in concrete situations. This remains the source of moral dilemma that will continue to make issues of conscience one of persistent debate. This research does not aim to end the debate because the tension it creates acts as a check on the two poles of the divide.

The question of “why” and “how” man is capable of obeying *another law* other than the eternal law supposedly “engraved” in his nature is not an issue this research would address.<sup>298</sup> Suffice it to say that it has all to do with human freedom which is nothing but the *ground* or *possibility* for all disobedience and sinfulness. The affirmation of human freedom implies that there ought to be a mechanism for ordering human reason to obey rather than disobey the natural law it recognizes in himself. This becomes the traditional role ascribed to conscience. It is the “voice” of God calling man to obedience to the eternal law. To be able to convince man not so much as to “abandon” his own “reason” (for human reason is basically ordered to the truth), as to be aware that he is not a law unto himself but is accountable to another authority. It seeks to

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<sup>298</sup> We want to note here in passing that the findings of evolution scientists have compounded the whole question of natural law – that is if we are to affirm that man evolved from lower forms. If natural law is ‘engraved’ in the very nature of humanity, and man evolved obeying bio-physical laws, how do we distinguish the ‘natural law’ from other innate tendencies that man is inclined to obey? In such a situation, it will no longer suffice to call this merely the “law of sin” given that it could be merely a reflection of man’s basic orientation to obey (if not identify with) biophysical laws just as all other lower forms from where he evolved.

affirm that the authority of human law depends *solely* on its alignment with the eternal law. Therefore, the autonomy of human reason is grounded on its allegiance to eternal reason.

John Paul II followed this approach by invoking the teaching of Leo XIII regarding the “*essential subordination of reason and human law to the Wisdom of God and to his law.*”<sup>299</sup> Leo made an appeal to “higher reason” to which the human reason submits itself thus: “But this prescription of human reason could not have the force of law unless it were the voice and interpreter of some higher reason to which our spirit and our freedom must be subject.”<sup>300</sup> If this is so, then, part of the essential role of conscience is to serve as a “mediator” [“interpreter”] between human freedom and law. It checks the human tendency to claim absolute autonomy. Hence John Paul II calls conscience the “proximate norm of personal morality,” as distinguished from divine law that is “the universal and objective norm of morality.” He argues that genuine human moral autonomy is found at the intersection of human freedom and God’s law when man freely submits to law of God. He affirmed with Bonaventure that:

Conscience is like God’s herald and messenger; it does not command things on its own authority, but commands them as coming from God’s authority, like a herald when he proclaims the edict of the king. This is why conscience has binding force.<sup>301</sup>

He locates the dignity of conscience precisely in “being the place, the sacred place where God speaks to man” even as he admits it to be a “mystery.”<sup>302</sup> The concluding point I will draw from *Veritatis Splendor* is John Paul II’s elaboration on the judgment of conscience. Apart from

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<sup>299</sup> *Veritatis Splendor*, 44.

<sup>300</sup> *Veritatis Splendor*, 44.

<sup>301</sup> St. Bonaventure, *II Librum Sentiat*. Dist. 39, a. 1, q. 3, conclusion: Ed. Ad Claras Aquas, II, 907b, cited in *Veritatis Splendor*, 58.

<sup>302</sup> *Veritatis Splendor*, 58.

reaffirming that it is a practical judgment – judgment about what to do in the concrete situation, or the “application of the law to a particular case” that imposes some “moral obligations,” he argues that the role of conscience is to apply objective law to a particular moral situation without that law losing its universality:

The universality of the law and its obligation are acknowledged, not suppressed, once reason has established the law’s application in concrete present circumstances. The judgment of conscience states “in an ultimate way” whether a certain particular kind of behavior is in conformity with the law; it formulates the proximate norm of the morality of a voluntary act, “applying the objective law to a particular case.”<sup>303</sup>

However, the claim to the universality of natural law is one that continues to attract heated debate because it directly implies a claim to objectivity, as the text cited above makes evident. The question that remains to be clarified is, if human reason grasps interiorly the universal and objective law (natural law) the primary principle of which is, “do good and avoid evil,” that conscience guides it to apply to specific cases in the *hic et nunc*, what is the warrant for the claim that conscience could not be erroneous? And who determines this error? In other words, to claim that the human mind is capable of knowing the objective truth regarding good and evil, and can apply it to particular concrete cases through the light of conscience, is the ground for the autonomy of reason, and the absolute authority of conscience.

The issue of *erroneous conscience*<sup>304</sup> is another problematic associated with conscience. Error arises at the intersection of application of objective law to concrete cases. The traditional teaching is that error of conscience could arise as a result of ignorance of the law.

By conscience, in a wonderful way, that law is made known which is fulfilled in the love of God and of one’s neighbor. Through loyalty to conscience Christians are joined to

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<sup>303</sup> *Veritatis Splendor*, 59.

<sup>304</sup> See Johnstone for a critical analysis of this in “Conscience and Error,” in *Conscience: Readings in Moral Theology*, 14, ed. Charles Curran (New York: Paulist Press, 2004)

other men in the search for truth and for the right solution to so many moral problems which arise both in the life of individuals and social relationships. Hence *the more a correct conscience prevails, the more do persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and try to be guided by the objective standards of moral conduct. Yet it often happens that conscience goes astray through ignorance which it is unable to avoid, without thereby losing its dignity. This cannot be said of the man who takes little trouble to find out what is true and good, or when conscience is by degrees almost blinded through the habit of committing sin.*<sup>305</sup>

It therefore distinguishes *vincible* and *invincible* ignorance based on the effort the individual made to inform oneself properly before taking a decision in conscience. So, conscience can be misled in its judgment of what is “right” and “wrong.” John Paul II affirms that human persons are capable of “discerning from evil” by virtue of their reason, but particularly by “reason enlightened by Divine revelation and faith.” And since on the Magisterium is reposed the sole right of providing “authentic interpretation”<sup>306</sup> of deposits of faith (Scripture and Tradition), the Christian has the added advantage of being guarded from error by listening and adhering to the moral pronouncements of the Church. And this does not mean limiting the freedom of conscience, for according to him:

The Magisterium *does not bring to the Christian conscience truths which are extraneous to it; rather it brings to light the truths which it ought already to possess*, developing them from the starting point of the primordial act of faith. The Church puts herself always at the service of conscience, helping it to avoid being tossed to and from by every wind of doctrine proposed by human deceit (Eph 4:14), and helping it not to swerve from the truth about the good of man, but rather, especially in more difficult questions, to attain the truth with certainty and to abide in it.<sup>307</sup>

If the role of the Church’s teaching office is basically to illumine the truth individuals already possess (Cardinal Ratzinger applies this to the papacy as having no power but that of conscience

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<sup>305</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 16

<sup>306</sup> *Dei Verbum*, 10.

<sup>307</sup> *Veritatis Splendor*, 64. The emphasis is ours. For the development of conscience, see CCC, 1784-1794.

which we shall explore in the next chapter when we examine conscience and community),<sup>308</sup> this implies the law that conscience mediates is innate. This seems to beg the question: if it already possesses the truth (“not extraneous”), then why bother teaching it? Of course this is a philosophical position that argues for innate ideas (or truth forms) that could be pedagogically drawn out. How does this hold up to another view that sees the mind as a tabula rasa at birth and learns everything through experience? This is an open debate we do not intend to indulge here. The foregoing has underscored the primary issues of conscience in the light of recent most important Church documents especially in relation to its notion and nature; its relation to law and objectivity, and its relationship to error and culpability. Given the evident ambiguity noted above, we now turn to Aquinas to see if we might find some clarity.

## **2.2.2 Thomas Aquinas on Conscience**

### **2.2.2.1 An Overview of Aquinas’ Anthropology: St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)**

remains *the* theologian of central significance in most contentious issues of Christian faith and morals including conscience. Given the incredible volume of his works, this segment would only attempt a synthesis of the essential contours of his thoughts on Conscience and that aspect of it that helps clarify some ambiguities as to its notion, nature and function.

Aquinas’ view of conscience can only be understood against the background of his anthropology which is largely an adaptation of Aristotle’s that we noted in Chapter one. Like Aristotle, he basically, views the human being as a “rational animal” or even more precisely, he agrees with Boethius that a human person is “a sentient being of a rational nature.” Reason

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<sup>308</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *On Conscience* (Philadelphia: Ignatian Press, 1991), p. 36

constitutes the essential difference that distinguishes the human person from other sentient beings or animals. A human being is a corporeal being, composed of body and a rational soul forming a psycho-physical unity (a person). He shares Aristotle's divisions of the soul into irrational and rational parts; while he further distinguishes vegetative and appetitive powers as constituting the irrational part, the speculative and intellectual powers constitute the rational part. According to him, the "essential function" of every intellect is "to express the true and the false."<sup>309</sup> The intellectual powers of the human soul operate as such but in a distinct manner: the speculative intellect is oriented to the absolutely true as its good, and the absolutely false as its evil. The practical intellect is not concerned with the absolutely true (as does the speculative) but has "conformable truth" (that which conforms to right appetite) as its good.<sup>310</sup>

Obviously, like Aristotle, Aquinas gives priority to reason not just because it constitutes its *specific differentia*, but that it is where human persons reflect the *Imago Dei* (the image of God).<sup>311</sup> The human person, like everything in creation, is oriented towards its natural end as ordained by the creator (God). God directs all creation through his eternally divine law. This teleological orientation is realized in human beings through reason as it is ordered to truth – the eternal Truth (God) and realized ultimately in the beatific vision. However, in practical terms, the human intellect cannot *directly* access this *eternal divine law* but only *participate* in it via an inner orientation of the mind towards *natural law* as they reflect on their experiences. Natural law then *mediates* the eternal law to the human intellect thereby ordering it towards its ultimate

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<sup>309</sup> Aquinas, Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, Op. Cit., p. 360

<sup>310</sup> Aquinas, Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, Op. Cit., p. 360

<sup>311</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1, Q. 93, a. 5, 6



goal – the beatific vision. He asserts “natural law is nothing else but a participation of the eternal law in a rational creature.”<sup>312</sup> The link between this background information and Conscience is that according to Aquinas, “the primary precept of natural law is that good should be done and pursued, and evil should be avoided,” and this he will identify not only as the foundation of all other precepts of natural law but also, and more importantly for us, is a constituent part of conscience – the *synderesis*. Therefore, the *primary precept of natural law* is the same as the *primary principle of practical reason* – a component of conscience. Let us now examine his theory of conscience in more detail.

#### 2.2.2.2 AQUINAS ON THE NOTION AND NATURE OF CONSCIENCE

Aquinas’ mature treatment of Conscience is found in the *Summa Theologiae* especially 1, Q. 79; and treated in passing in 1-II, Q. 19.<sup>313</sup> It is evident that he did not have any exhaustive development of his notion of conscience because even in Q. 79 he addresses it in merely two articles (articles 12 and 13) as part of his comprehensive treatise on “intellectual powers”. In these articles he distinguishes “*synderesis*”<sup>314</sup> from “conscience” affirming that both are not powers, but admits that while the former is a habit, the latter is an act. According to him,

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<sup>312</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, 1-II*, 91, 2; See also, AA. 2. This “participation” is imperfect.

<sup>313</sup> Aquinas also addressed the issue of Conscience in his *Commentaries on the Sentences* of Peter Lombard; and in *Disputed Questions on Truth* which we regard as equally valid but older expressions of his views on the subject.

<sup>314</sup> For a comprehensive history of the controversy surrounding this term, see Philippe Delhaye, *The Christian Conscience*, and Trans by Charles Underhill Quinn (New York: Descalee Company, 1968), 105-119. He notes that it was the Scholastics that stirred up the problem in an attempt to give a metaphysical status to habitual conscience and looking at the text of St. Jerome that “seems to say the habitual conscience is called *συντήρησις*, in contradistinction to the actual conscience, called *συνείδησις*. They accepted this word. Some historians today think however that there is a copyist’s error here, and that the same word *συνείδησις* is used for both the habitual and the actual conscience. This matters very little, in any case, for even if it is erroneous by origin, the word *synderesis* is practical.” *Ibid.*, p.

Now the first speculative principles bestowed on us by nature do not belong to a special power, but to a special habit, which is called *the understanding of principles*, as the Philosopher explains (Ethic. Vi. 6). Wherefore the first practical principles, bestowed on us by nature, do not belong to a special power, but to a special habit, which we call *synderesis*. Whence *synderesis* is said to incite good, and to murmur at evil, inasmuch as through first principles we proceed to discover, and judge of what we have discovered. It is therefore clear that *synderesis* is not a power, but a natural habit.<sup>315</sup>

Aquinas affirms in the previous article (11) that the speculative and practical intellects are not different powers but are distinguished and “*named by their respective ends*” (*consideration of, or speculation on, truth and operations* respectively). The basic function of the intellect is apprehension (knowledge) of truth. Now he argues that the basic framework of all knowledge is the capacity to understand principles. The speculative intellect has as a habit (a permanent disposition) the understanding of primary principles relative to speculation, and the practical intellect has as a habit the understanding of primary principles relative to operation (practical matters). This latter is designated as *synderesis* – the knowledge of first practical principles that enables it to distinguish “good” from “evil”. It is an inner disposition that inclines us to the truly good. Its relationship to natural law is that it has the precepts of natural law as its object.

On the other hand, Aquinas explains that conscience from its very etymology means “a relation of knowledge to something” (or “*cum alio scientia*” “knowledge applied to an individual

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105. The text of St. Jerome in question taken from the *Glossa Ordinaria* reads, “*Plerique juxta Platonem, rationabilitatem animae et irascentiam et concupiscentiam ad hominem et leonem et vitulum referunt...Quartam supra haec et extra haec tria ponunt, quam Graeci vocant synderesim: quae scintilla conscientiae in Cain quoque non extinguitur...quam proprie aquilae deputant, non se miscentem tribus sed ipsa errantia corrigentem...Hic est spiritus qui interpellat pro nobis gemitibus inenarrabilibus.*” (“Most authors, following Plato in this, see the reason, the irascible, the concupiscible in the man, the lion, the ox of prophecy...The fourth psychological power that they see above and beyond the three others is called *synderesis* by the Greeks: it is the spark of conscience that was not extinguished even in Cain...It is properly illustrated by the eagle who does not mingle with the other animals, and can pounce down upon them. It is the ‘spirit’ that speaks for God in us through indescribable groanings”). See *Ibid.*

<sup>315</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *S.T. I. Q. 79. a. 12*. The stresses are his. Aquinas defines “habit” as “a disposition of a subject which is in a state of potentiality either to form or to operation.” *S.T. I-II, Q. 50, a. 1*

case”), and such application, in terms of knowledge, implies an act rather than a power.<sup>316</sup> In other words, he defines conscience as the “application of knowledge to action.”<sup>317</sup> He admits that the different attributes ascribable to conscience (“to witness, to bind, or incite, to accuse, torment, or rebuke”) are “applications of knowledge to what we do” (an act). However, given that a habit is a principle of act, sometimes conscience is given the name of its first natural habit. In other words, conscience and *synderesis* are often used interchangeably even though they should be properly distinguished.<sup>318</sup>

Therefore, *synderesis* is related to conscience as principle is related to act. This is understandable if we consider further this intimate relationship. *Synderesis* provides the basic principle of moral action that says “moral evil must be avoided.” When the individual encounters a moral situation like the urge to kill somebody (say, Mr. B.) his reason first queries thus, “is it proper to kill anybody?” Reflecting back on the first principle (“evil must be avoided”) if he is illumined by it, he judges that “killing anybody at all is an evil act.”<sup>319</sup> He then may conclude that in the present situation, “to kill Mr. B is an evil act to be avoided.” The principle involved is

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<sup>316</sup> Aquinas, *S. T.*, 1, Q. 79, a. 13; In *Disputations* he says, “Hence, to be conscious (*conscire*) means to know together (*simul scire*). But any knowledge can be applied to a thing. Hence, conscience cannot denote a special habit or power, but designates the act itself, which is the application of any habit or of any knowledge to some particular act.” Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Truth*, Q. 17, a. 1

<sup>317</sup> Aquinas, *S. T.*, 1-II, Q. 19, a. 5

<sup>318</sup> Aquinas, *Ibid*

<sup>319</sup> This is rather a simple presentation as to how one arrives at moral decision. For a comprehensive analysis of the process of moral act (“order of action”) in Aquinas, see *S. T.* 1-II, Q. 15, a. 3. If we are to consider the above as a syllogism, the secondary deduction is the application of the virtue of prudence that helps in providing secondary principles of moral action and in this way relates intimately with conscience and *synderesis*. Error occurs from the secondary deduction and conclusion and not in first part (primary principles of *synderesis* are without error).

provided by the *habit* we call *synderesis*, and the conclusion is an *act* of conscience.<sup>320</sup> Note that this conclusion is still a “judgment” as distinct from a “decision” as to how to act which is left to his will which is always free as to choice. Therefore, though *synderesis* and the act of conscience are intimately connected, it is evident that they are distinguishable. If the person goes on to still choose to kill Mr B. there results again the accusatory acts of conscience we noted above. Given this intrinsic connection, it does make some sense why the old scholastic terminologies: *habitual conscience*, *actual conscience*, and *antecedent* or *consequent consciences*<sup>321</sup> were applied respectively to capture the different nuances inherent in the notion of conscience.

He admits that though there are many habits that inform conscience, however, “they all take effect through one chief habit, the grasp of principles called *synderesis*.”<sup>322</sup> It is helpful to point out that Aquinas locates *synderesis* and conscience in the rational part of the soul as against locating it in the appetitive part like St. Bonaventure does.<sup>323</sup> He insists that *synderesis* is not

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<sup>320</sup> See how Aquinas presents this argument using adultery in *Commentary on the Sentences, II*, 39. Q. 3 (T. D. Williams 2008)

<sup>321</sup> For an explication of this traditional role of conscience, see Thomas D. Williams, *Knowing Right from Wrong: A Christian Guide to Conscience*, e- book edition (New York: Faith Word, Hachette Book Group, Inc., 2008), pp. 309-363. Williams distinguishes judgments of conscience from decisions of the will. He then explains antecedent conscience as the act of counsel that guides our actions prior to our action. It “warns or encourages, commands or forbids.” Concomitant conscience is the role of conscience in accompanying my action while acting – providing judgment and giving me a sense of feeling good or bad about my present actions. The “consequent conscience” is the role of conscience as a judge of my *past* action[s] condemning or upholding them as right or wrong. This is usually accompanied by praise or blame (feelings of guilt) respectively. We shall be revisiting this distinction between decisions of the will and the judgment of conscience to show its significance for the role of conscience in behaviour at the end of this chapter.

<sup>322</sup> Aquinas, *S. T.* 1, Q.79, a.13

<sup>323</sup> Bonaventure locates conscience and *synderesis* in the affective part of the soul (the will), giving priority to the will against the reason. He argues that just as reason cannot move except as mediated by the will, in like manner, *synderesis* cannot move except as mediated by conscience. For an elaborate articulation of his thoughts on conscience, see Douglas C. Langston, *Conscience and Other Virtues* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), pp. 21-37

subject to error because its assertions are as self-evident as the first principles of theoretical reason. As first principles, their stability is critical to knowledge derived from it.<sup>324</sup> He says:

As a result, for probity to be possible in human actions, there must be some permanent principle which has unwavering integrity, in reference to which all human works are examined, so that that permanent principle will resist all evil and assist to all good. This is *synderesis*, whose task is to warn against evil and incline to good. Therefore, we agree that there can be no error in it.<sup>325</sup>

Aquinas affirms that *synderesis* is connatural to the soul as the light of the active intellect; therefore, it is impossible to extinguish it from the soul but it could be hindered in those without the use of free choice and/or reason (due to bodily injury or the like).<sup>326</sup> He does admit however, that it could be extinguished in particular judgments especially in specific situations where:

[T]he force of concupiscence, or another passion, so absorbs reason that in choice the universal judgment of *synderesis* is not applied to the particular act. But this does not destroy *synderesis* altogether, but only in some respect. Hence, absolutely speaking, we concede that *synderesis* is never destroyed.<sup>327</sup>

It is then with regard to “particular judgments” that error is related to conscience – it is subject to error based on wrong application of *synderesis* by way of illogical inferences that could result in wrong conclusions. However, he upholds the binding nature of conscience, even one in error.<sup>328</sup> The reason is that the goodness of the will depends on reason in respect to its object – there is nothing in the will except that proposed to it by reason. If reason proposes an object as evil, even if this object is not evil but good in itself, the will by accepting it, accepts evil and

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<sup>324</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Truth*, trans by James V. Mc Glynn (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), Q. 16, a. 2

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>327</sup> *Disputed Questions*, 16, a. 3

<sup>328</sup> *Disputed Questions*, 16, a. 2

therefore is evil. In this article he equates reason with conscience. Hence, reason or conscience that proposes something evil (though erroneously) still binds the will absolutely simply because it does not know it is in error. Hence an erroneous conscience binds absolutely.<sup>329</sup> On the other hand, in the *Summa*, answering the question of the goodness of the will that abides by a defective reason, he evokes the culpable and inculpable ignorance that has long become traditional teaching. Culpable ignorance (is a voluntary act) does not excuse since one follows a defective reason or conscience in matters one is supposed to know better; but inculpable ignorance excuses for one fails to know not out of negligence but by the fact of his circumstances – an involuntary act.<sup>330</sup>

It is open to debate whether the foregoing Aquinas' treatise on conscience provides us with a lucid and *integral* account of the definition, nature, and function of conscience. If we answer in the negative, we might then assume perhaps that this lack is the reason the notion of conscience was taken over and developed by scholastics to the point that casuistry became its inevitable outcome; and it is perhaps still the reason why the issue remains contentious. Be that as it may, we add that Aquinas could neither be accused of leaving us in serious doubt as to what conscience is, nor of its nature and function even if he fails to provide an integral definition of it – that is, if one is ever possible given the double aspect that the reality entails.

### **2.2.2.3 AQUINAS ON CONSCIENCE AND PRUDENCE**

The issue that concerns this research is not so much the tension between the objective and subjective poles of conscience (its relationship to law as such), nor its proneness to error, as it is

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<sup>329</sup> *S. T. 1-II, Q. 19, A. 5;*

<sup>330</sup> Aquinas, *S.T. 1-II, Q. 19, a. 6*

to find out if conscience does have an influence on human behavior as such. Unfortunately, we do not find any direct reference to this in Aquinas. However, his arguments on prudence and on weakness of the will seem to provide an opening to understand his mind on this. To that then we now turn our attention.

Aquinas forges a link between prudence and conscience such that conscience does not function properly without prudence. He defines prudence as “the right judgment of things to be done” (*recta ratio agibilium*) distinguishing it from art which is “the right reason for things to be made.”<sup>331</sup> Aquinas moral vision is geared towards living a good life in all its ramifications and not merely being a “good man”. He considers prudence as necessary to live a good moral life because reason needs to be perfected by an “intellectual virtue” in order for it to choose well the specific ends of human life. This intellectual virtue is prudence. For Aquinas, the goal or function of prudence is to determine the rightness of things to be done. He says, “Prudence is of good counsel about matters regarding man’s entire life and the end of human life.”<sup>332</sup> Given that the intellect is itself *not infallible* in contingent matters, the practical intellect that deals with operation (and its truth is about “conformity to right appetite”) needs a virtue that perfects it with regard to practical choices. So he distinguishes “three acts of reason” in respect to action thus:

Prudence is *right reason applied to action*, as stated above (A.2). Hence that which is the chief act of reason in regard to action must needs be the chief act of prudence. Now there are three such acts. The first is *to take counsel*, which belongs to discovery, for counsel is an act of inquiry, as stated above. The second act is *to judge of what one has discovered*, and this is an act of the speculative reason. But the practical reason, which is directed to action, goes further, and its third act is *to command*, which act consists in applying to action the things counseled and judged. And

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<sup>331</sup> Aquinas, *S. T. I-II*, Q. 57, a. 4

<sup>332</sup> Aquinas, *S.T., I-II*, Q. 57, a. 4, ad 3

since this act approaches nearer to the end of practical reason, it follows that it is the chief act of the practical reason, and consequently of prudence.<sup>333</sup>

Aquinas consigns counsel and judgment as acts proper to the speculative intellect, but *command* is about operation, and therefore specific to the practical intellect. This shows why prudence is located in the practical intellect but also has as goal the effecting of its chief act – command. He argues that a prudent person should know universal principles and how to apply them to particular situations, but knowledge of principles is not the chief act of prudence. The obvious question this raises is, “how is prudence related to conscience?” The answer perhaps is found in his claim that prudence does not appoint the end of moral virtues but “to regulate the means.” It is *synderesis* (principles of natural reason) that appoints the end of moral virtues by directing them to act in accord with reason.<sup>334</sup> In the *prima pars secundae* he notes two parts in choice: the “intention of the end,” that belongs to moral virtues; and the “preferential choice of that which is unto the end,” that belongs to prudence.<sup>335</sup> James F. Keenan observes a shift in Aquinas on the role of prudence – admitting in *prima pars secundae* (Q. 66, a. 3, ad 3) that it not only directs the moral virtues “in the choice of means” “but also in appointing the end” but later admits in the *secunda secundae* that it is *synderesis* that appoints the end but prudence “regulates the means.” Keenan however affirms that Aquinas still maintains the priority of prudence (as an intellectual virtue) over the moral virtues.<sup>336</sup> It is not this priority that is at issue for us here,<sup>337</sup> rather, it is the

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<sup>333</sup> Aquinas, *S.T. II-II*, Q. 47, a. 8 (The stresses are his).

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.* Q. 47, a. 7. He cites temperance and fortitude as two moral virtues that their end is precisely to be in conformity with right reason; the former insists that the agent should not stray from right reason in favor of passions, the later that he “should not stray for fear or daring.”

<sup>335</sup> Aquinas, *S.T. I-II*, Q. 56, a. 4, ad 4

<sup>336</sup> James F. Keenan, “The Virtue of Prudence (IIa IIae, qq. 47-56), in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, Stephen J. Pope (ed.), Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), pp. 259-260



relationship of prudence to *conscience* as such (as distinct from *synderesis*). In other words, if we admit that Aquinas gives over to *synderesis* (principles of natural reason or natural law) the role of appointing the end to moral virtues and prudence regulates the means, how is this prudential role different from conscience since this latter is also the “application of knowledge to what we do” in concrete situations as seen above? Moreover the traditional models of conscience (*habitual*, *actual*, and *concomitant* conscience) that tries to apply Aquinas’ distinction to explicate its nature and operation only reinforces the confusion as to its relation to prudence. Furthermore, if “judgment” and “counsel” are acts of the speculative intellect, are these analogous to or identified with the *counsels* and *judgments* of conscience? To underscore this point we need to revisit Aquinas’ *psychology of action*.

Aquinas’ psychology of action is articulated more exhaustively in the *Summa*. The analysis as to the exact sequence and order is open to differing interpretations and debate. We follow the scheme Daniel Westberg adopted because it agrees more with our own reading. Westberg reasons that Aquinas introduced an unnecessary complexity into the structure of human action and thereby made a fundamental change to Aristotle’s own structure that he built upon. According to him, Aquinas introduces will as a “separate force” and providing distinct stages in the process (in stage 8, for instance, he introduces choice or *electio* as an act of will [*voluntas*] where Aristotle made *prohairesis* an act of reason).<sup>338</sup> Evidently, Aquinas uses

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<sup>337</sup> Keenan dedicates sufficient space to show that Aquinas gives priority to Prudence over the moral virtues (*Ibid*).

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid*, p. 120 He argues that comparisons of various stages of action show an inconsistency especially in stages 1-4; 8-12 of the process.

“electio” for choice (the ability to “receive one thing while refusing another”); but Westberg argues as follows:

Thomas regarded *liberum arbitrium* and *electio* to be equivalent to Aristotle's *prohairesis*, understood in both a general and a particular sense. *Prohairesis* in EN III is treated as the principle of action, while in books VI and VII it is more specifically the act of choice leading to action. The terminology available in the Latin discussions allowed Aquinas to use *liberum arbitrium* for the general sense and *electio* for the particular (which may be distinguished as 'free choice' and 'choice'). The citation of Aristotle's description of *prohairesis* as *intellectus appetitivus vel appetitus intellectivus* is meant to underscore the primary contention, found in all of Thomas' treatments, that human choice involves an intimate combination of both reason and will.<sup>339</sup>

Westberg argues that it is this “intimate combination” of reason and will in the process of human action that is usually distorted in most interpretations of Aquinas. Please see next page for the illustration of Aquinas’ process of human action. In that schema there are two major categories in the complex process of human action: *order of intention* and *execution*. The first four sub-categories (1-4) are about the end of a contemplated act; and the second sub-categories (5-8) are deliberations about means. Categories (1-8) are in the order of intention (are immanent) or interior to the agent. The last four sub-categories (9-12) are about practical action or execution and the enjoyment of the completed act. While these twelve categories are split equally between intellect and will, their integral relationship should not be overlooked.

### **Illustration of Process of Human Action in Aquinas**

<b>Intellect</b>	<b>Will</b>
<b>About the End</b>	
1. Apprehension of the end (apprehensio; simplex intellectus)	2. Wish, Willing the end (Velle, simplex voluntas)

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<sup>339</sup> Westberg, *Ibid.* p. 88 *Liberium arbitrium* in Aquinas is the power of the human agent over his actions. It is the primary principle of moral action that is a power exercised by both reason and will together. *S.T. I-II, prologue*; I, 1

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 3. Judgment about the end<br><i>Judicium circa finem</i> (or <i>judicium synderesis</i> ) | 4. Intention ( <i>intentio</i> ) |
|---|----------------------------------|

**About Means**

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 5. Deliberation ( <i>consilium</i> )                | 6. Consent ( <i>consensus</i> ) |
| 7. Practical judgment ( <i>judicium practicum</i> ) | 8. Choice ( <i>electio</i> )    |

**About Execution**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 9. Command ( <i>imperium</i> )           | 10. Use; application ( <i>usus; usus activus</i> )          |
| 11. Performance ( <i>usus passivus</i> ) | 12. Enjoyment, completion ( <i>fruitio</i> ) <sup>340</sup> |

Aquinas locates *synderesis* and *conscience* within the intellect as acts of practical reason. They also fall within the order of intention since they do not exceed the point of decision.<sup>341</sup>

Synderesis (as primary principle or “capacity” or “judgment”) and Conscience (as “capacity” or “process” of applying this knowledge to concrete cases) specifically involves 3, 5, 7 of the process (judgment about end, deliberation about means and practical judgment) but without detriment to its influence on 4, 6, and 8 (*intentio, consensus, electio*). The transition from intention to execution is achieved by “command” (*imperium*) which is an act of prudence. Like in “choice,” “command” is an act of reason that presupposes “an act of the will” and shows again the mutual relation between intellect and will. Aquinas says, “the reason reasons about willing, and the will wills to reason, the result is that the act of reason precedes the act of the will, and

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<sup>340</sup> Daniel Westberg, *Right Practical Reason: Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 121-122. Westberg affirms that his table “is a compilation from various standard accounts; for the English terms see J. A. Oesterle, *Ethics: The Introduction to Moral Science* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ., 1957), 85; V. Bourke, *Ethics: A Textbook in Moral Philosophy* (New York, 1966); and T. Gilby in the Black friars edn. of *ST*, xvii. 211 and xviii, 143 (where most of the Latin equivalents are also given). See also A. Gardeil, “Acte humain”, *DTC* i. 339-46, at 343. For fuller discussion see T. Urdanoz, “Esencia y proceso psicológico del acto libre según santo Tomás”, *Estudios filosóficos*, 2 (1953), 291-318; and S. Pinckaers, “La Structure de l’acte humain suivant s. Thomas”, *RT* 55 (1955), 393-412. Pinckaers pointed out the dependence of modern studies on C.-R. Billuart, *Summa Sancti Thomae Hodiernis Academicarum Moribus Accommodata* (Paris, 1876).” *Ibid*, p. 120

<sup>341</sup> Robert J. Smith, *Conscience and Catholicism*, Op. Cit., p. 25

conversely.”<sup>342</sup> This is partly why interpreting Aquinas precisely is difficult. The foregoing shows not just the close relationship between conscience and prudence in Aquinas but also the close relationship he maintain in his moral theory between intellect and will in human action in general. Let us now examine contemporary theological views on conscience.

### 2.2.3 Contemporary Theological Views of Conscience

*The approach of Veritatis Splendor emphasizes the letter of the law and asserts the authority of the Magisterium and a submissive model of conscience, apparently claiming that personal conscience and reason cannot be set in opposition to the teaching of the Magisterium, and seemingly setting the authority of conscience and the Church in opposition.*<sup>343</sup>

**Jane Hoose:** The epigraph above is an extract from Jayne Hoose that appropriately sets the tone for our examination of theological viewpoints in this section. Hoose’s basic argument is that in *Veritatis Splendor*, there is a visible tendency to suppress the conscience by “a move of power towards the Magisterium,” and that this constitutes a “departure” from Vatican II model of conscience that allows “free inquiry *helped* by the teaching or instruction, communication and dialogue.”<sup>344</sup> At the root of her argument is that *Veritatis Splendor* (and by extension, the *Catechism*) instead of allowing for a “genuine intellectual or imaginative pursuit of the truth” by each individual [Christian], imposes on conscience the hierarchical Church’s *interpretations* of natural law that represents only one aspect (or a “guarantee” not a certainty) of the truth. She

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<sup>342</sup> Aquinas, *S. T. I-II*, Q.17, a. 1

<sup>343</sup> Jayne Hoose, “Conscience in *Veritatis Splendor* and the *Catechism*,” in *Conscience: Readings in Moral Theology, 14*, ed. Charles Curran (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), p. 91.

<sup>344</sup> Jayne Hoose, “Conscience in *Veritatis Splendor* and the *Catechism*,” p. 89.

argues that this imposition is a suppression of conscience and a delimitation of its autonomy and freedom.

Evidently, this revokes the complex problem of the relationship between the objectivity of law and its subjective interpretation and/or application. In this instance, it is a claim that the “interpretations” of the objective law does not have a warranty to an absolute claim to objectivity and/or certainty. In other words, such magisterial “interpretations” or teachings, are subjective rather than objective affirmations of the truth, and therefore should not be assumed otherwise. Such assumptions, as she claims are evident in *Veritatis Splendor* and the *Catechism*, usurps the powers of the individual reason to be “imaginative” in its search for the truth, and therefore deposes the authority of conscience. I cannot make a judgment on her claim regarding the documents,<sup>345</sup> but we can take up the issue of this “relationship” between the *objective law* and the *subjective* “interpretation” of it either by the individual or by an external authority in other authors. She however touches on the heart of the current debate the authority of conscience.

**Linda Hogan** in “Conscience in the Documents of Vatican II”<sup>346</sup> raised very critical questions about the coherence<sup>347</sup> of Vatican II documents on conscience. According to her, there are prevailing ambiguities regarding the role of conscience in the life of a Christian that people often wrongly assume that Vatican II addressed. She classified such ambiguities under four

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<sup>345</sup> John Paul II addressed sufficiently this kind of mindset specifically in the same document, *Veritatis Splendor*, 54-55; See also the article by Patrick McCormick, “Hierarchical Church Teaching and Conscience,” in *Conscience: Readings in Moral Theology*, 14<sub>2</sub> ed. Charles Curran (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), pp. 103-108.

<sup>346</sup> Linda Hogan, “Conscience in the Document of Vatican II,” in *Conscience: Readings in Moral Theology*, 14<sub>2</sub> ed. Charles Curran (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), pp. 82-88

<sup>347</sup> Hogan cited James Gaffney who declared an inherent incoherence in the documents of Vatican II on conscience. See James Gaffney, *Matters of Faith and Morals* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1987), pp. 115-133, cited by Hogan, p. 82

related points: The relationship between conscience and law; the question of discernment and obedience; the problem of erroneous conscience; and the role of the Magisterium.<sup>348</sup> She then goes on to pose these questions:

Is conscience about following church law or about determining for oneself what is right and good? Is conscience about obedience or discernment? How can conscience err if it is the voice of God? What is the relationship between individual and institutional moral authority?<sup>349</sup>

Evidently these are very critical and legitimate questions. Actually, all of these questions have been addressed by the documents we cited earlier except that Hogan is questioning the presuppositions inherent in the answers the specific documents of Vatican II provided. This obviously delimits the scope of her inquiry. Moreover, Vatican II only provided broad outlines that subsequent teachings should build upon in the development of thought and teachings.<sup>350</sup> According to Hogan, the document[s] coming out of Vatican II compounded these questions instead of resolving them. She develops her argument under four headings following the questions above. Regarding the relationship between conscience and law, she noted an ambiguity in *Dignitatis Humanae* and *Gaudium et Spes*. The former declared the divine law as the ultimate moral norm even while admitting that this norm is “not directly accessible” to both individual human persons and the Magisterium. However, since the document claims that individuals “participate” in the divine law through the conscience, it suggests an understanding that

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<sup>348</sup> See Linda Hogan, “Conscience in the Document of Vatican II,” in *Conscience: Readings in Moral Theology*, 14, ed. Charles Curran (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), p. 82.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>350</sup> It is interesting to note that she acknowledged that Vatican II provided only broad outlines. See Hogan, p. 83.

conscience is “the capacity for moral consciousness, the traditional *synderesis*.”<sup>351</sup> But *Gaudium et Spes* subordinates conscience to the law of God as interpreted by the Magisterium.<sup>352</sup>

On the question of discernment and/or obedience she observes gross ambiguity in *Gaudium et Spes* where the role of conscience is first articulated as one of “obedience to the objective moral law,”<sup>353</sup> only to also affirm it as discerning the “voice” of God that “echoes in their depths” and irrespective of their religious affiliations. She argues that these views conflict with each other.<sup>354</sup> On erroneous conscience she wonders how the documents could affirm that conscience is the “voice” of God in human depths, and also hold that it is subject to error. She cites Cardinal Ratzinger’s comment in support of this ambiguity. According to her, Ratzinger ponders: “how conscience can err if God’s voice is directly to be heard in it, is unexplained.”<sup>355</sup> She traces the roots of this ambiguity to the concerns of the council fathers about lending too much weight to subjective aspect of conscience with its inherent dangers for relativism. They therefore “reintroduced the traditional formulae”<sup>356</sup> that subordinates conscience to law and as interpreted by the Church, predicated on the assumption that it is subject to error. Though she did not indicate that the council fathers’ concerns were legitimate, she however seems to suggest that the move was like sacrificing proper definitions at the altar of expediency. She proposed that

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<sup>351</sup> Hogan, “Conscience in the Document of Vatican II,” p. 83.

<sup>352</sup> See *Gaudium et Spes*, #50.

<sup>353</sup> Hogan, “Conscience in the Document of Vatican II,” p. 84.

<sup>354</sup> Hogan, “Conscience in the Document of Vatican II,” p. 84.

<sup>355</sup> Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, quoted in Michael Allsopp, “Conscience, the Church and Moral Truth: John Henry Newman, Vatican II, Today,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 58 (1992), p. 197, cited by Hogan, p. 85.

<sup>356</sup> Hogan, p. 85.

observing the distinction between *rightness* and *goodness* would help in understanding how an erroneous conscience (objectively wrong) could be subjectively good and blameless.<sup>357</sup>

Finally, she also noted the ambiguity inherent in the document in explicating the relationship between conscience and the Magisterium. She queries the warrant for subjecting conscience to the objective law according to the “authentic” interpretations of the Magisterium as if the conscience is not also an “authentic” interpreter of divine law contrary to its earlier affirmation that conscience is the “voice” of God. He argues that unless the autonomy of conscience is respected its role becomes one of “passive implementations” of Church’s teachings and “mechanistic applications of predetermined principles.”<sup>358</sup>

She admits that the authorities of conscience and magisterium need not be seen as mutually opposed but complementary, but this is the ideal goal that the personalist aspect of Vatican II could realize. She therefore proposed that when confronted with ambiguities, the “general moral framework”<sup>359</sup> that Vatican II provided should be the guide but that entails a paradigm shift towards personalism.<sup>360</sup> Evidently, the core of her analyses revolves around the restraints placed on the autonomy of conscience.<sup>361</sup> It is refreshing that she recognizes that these ambiguities are not mutually contradictory but complementary. So, her critique only serves to

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<sup>357</sup> Hogan, “Conscience in the Documents of Vatican II,” pp. 85-6. She refers to James Keenan’s work, “Goodness and Rightness in Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1992), p. 143.

<sup>358</sup> Hogan, “Conscience in the Documents of Vatican II,” p. 87.

<sup>359</sup> Hogan, “Conscience in the Documents of Vatican II,” p. 83.

<sup>360</sup> Hogan, “Conscience in the Documents of Vatican II,” pp. 83, 87

<sup>361</sup> William May presented a view that explains “our obligation in conscience to seek the truth where we can reasonably expect to find it.” See W. May, “Vatican II, Church Teaching, and Conscience,” in *Conscience: Readings in Moral Theology*, 14<sup>th</sup> ed., Charles Curran (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), pp. 95-101.



underscore the abiding tension in the relationship between the subjective and objective poles of conscience that will continue to stimulate debate. A critical point in her analysis is the fact of restraints put on the autonomy of conscience by imposing on it the interpretive authority of the Magisterium as a condition for its inerrancy. We have considered her views with respect to Vatican II documents with which we opened this segment. We noted the ambiguity inherent in its positions, and Logan's perspective above underscores the need for more clarity in the ongoing development of this concept. Let us now examine some other views not specific to Vatican II documents. We turn to German Grisez and Russel Shaw.

**German Grisez** and **Russel Shaw**'s co-authored an article with a critical comment on the different contemporary misconceptions of conscience in these words:

Quite a few strange ideas about conscience are in circulation these days. There is conscience as an inner voice which pipes up saying "Don't!" whenever one is tempted. There is conscience on Freudian lines – an irrational residue of infantile tussles with authority figures. There is conscience on a Promethean model, where one's solitary conscience is the only gauge of right and wrong that matters. And, perhaps especially for some Catholics, there is conscience as rebel: "The Church can't tell *me* what to do."<sup>362</sup>

Their analyses explored the psychological roots of these models in an effort to show how they constitute misconceived notions of conscience. Essentially, from the psychological point of view, they distinguished the "voice" of superego from the "voice" of authentic conscience. They asserted, "superego is nonreflective and essentially nonrational. Whatever its role in the lives of particular individuals, it is not conscience."<sup>363</sup> They rejected all claims that identify conscience

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<sup>362</sup> Germain Grisez and Russell Shaw, "Conscience: Knowledge of Moral Truth," in *Conscience: Readings in Moral Theology*, 14<sup>th</sup> ed., Charles Curran (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), p. 39.

<sup>363</sup> Grisez and Shaw, "Conscience: Knowledge of Moral Truth," p. 40.

with the “sense of right and wrong”<sup>364</sup> that emerges later in adolescent moral development as a product of cultural and/or group dynamics characterized by legalistic allegiance to ‘group/society’ demands but graduates to rebellion in the search for self-identity. This, they argue metamorphosed into a prevailing mindset today that sees conscience as “the principle of individual self-assertion against social standards.” They affirm that the claim that “I make my own rules” is to absolutize “individual desires” as the law; and this, in actual fact, derogates the dignity of conscience.<sup>365</sup>

They then conceived conscience as primarily “one’s awareness of moral truth – of that which is truly right and good to do.”<sup>366</sup> This primary orientation of conscience towards the truth is what distinguishes it from either the cravings of the superego or the immature group-identity-seeking legalistic models. The authentic and mature conscience instead of seeking for the shortcuts to the moral life, rather asks: “What is the “good and wise thing to do?” And the authentic or “mature” Christian conscience asks further: “What is the wise and holy thing to do?”<sup>367</sup> They traced the most appropriate biblical understanding of conscience to Paul (Rom 2:14-15) that was adapted by the council fathers (*GS* 16). And the basis for erroneous conscience they found in 1Cor 4:4-5 and 1 John 3:19-20.

They held that *Vatican II* borrowed insight from Aquinas’ treatise on conscience for he distinguishes “moral principles, moral reasoning, and judgments of right and wrong” wherewith

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<sup>364</sup> Grisez and Shaw, “Conscience: Knowledge of Moral Truth,” p. 40.

<sup>365</sup> Grisez and Shaw, “Conscience: Knowledge of Moral Truth,” p. 41.

<sup>366</sup> Grisez and Shaw, “Conscience: Knowledge of Moral Truth,” p. 41.

<sup>367</sup> Grisez and Shaw, “Conscience: Knowledge of Moral Truth,” p. 41.

he reserved “judgment” as a function of conscience.<sup>368</sup> Conscience is therefore the last measure of what is right and wrong, hence the absolute moral authority it wields with an attendant obligation to obey it. One is obliged to obey even an erroneous conscience because one does not know it is erroneous for to have such knowledge indicates that one is not following his authentic conscience. The fact that conscience is prone to error implies the necessity of properly forming one’s conscience.

They hold that the primary role of the Church is to act as a “guide” in the formation of right Christian consciences. Unfortunately, those “schooled in legalism” always assume that the Church is imposing “rules” by her teachings. Moreover, they noted that part of the reason for dissent to the Church’s teaching is hinged on certain ambivalent attitude - an inconsistency of character whereby people want to enjoy the privileges attached to Church membership but not willing to pay the price. Another reason is “lack of insight into moral truth” on the part of both the teacher and the taught.<sup>369</sup> They argued that the moral teachings of the Church are neither ‘mysterious’ nor “impenetrable” but open to all in their basic principles. Failure to see the truth in them is with the individual rather than with the Church. They however observed that the Church has emphasized the normative aspect in her teachings (“do not commit adultery,” “do not kill,” among others) without giving proper attention to why people are usually tempted to do such things. Nevertheless, those who are genuinely open to the truth will always see the Church’s teachings as a “precious source of light” rather than an “imposition.”<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> Grisez and Shaw, “Conscience: Knowledge of Moral Truth,” p. 43.

<sup>369</sup> Grisez and Shaw, “Conscience: Knowledge of Moral Truth,” p. 48.

<sup>370</sup> Grisez and Shaw, “Conscience: Knowledge of Moral Truth,” p. 49.

We think that despite the lucidity of the points Grisez and Shaw made in this submission they leave obscure the thorny issue of the tension between objective and subjective poles. There is a certain simplification of the problem such that one seems forced to conclude that the role of conscience is a mere passive obedience to the teachings of the Church.

**Richard Gula** took his point of departure in articulating his understanding of Conscience from seeking its biblical equivalent that he locates in the idea of the “heart” – the seat of decision and action, feelings and emotions, intention and consciousness.<sup>371</sup> He distinguishes between three dimensions of conscience: “a capacity, a process, and a judgment.”<sup>372</sup> As “a capacity” it discerns between good and evil; as “a process” it discovers more and more through inquiry and “critical investigation” what is right and good as distinguished from bad and wrong (a process of growth in knowledge). And as “a judgment,” it determines the moral quality of a specific action either yet to be done, being done now, or already done.<sup>373</sup> This, according to Gula, “is the practical judgment that takes place in one’s *heart* where one is alone with God.”<sup>374</sup> It is that application of the general principle of morality “do good and avoid evil” to particular and concrete act. He therefore argues that a proper contemporary understanding of conscience integrates the rational and emotive aspects of the human person:

In the light of the three dimensions of conscience, a contemporary approach to conscience focuses on the whole person. Conscience includes not only cognitive and volitional aspects, but also affective, intuitive, and somatic ones as well. We understand the moral conscience

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<sup>371</sup> See Richard Gula, “The Moral Conscience,” in *Conscience: Readings in Moral Theology*, 14<sup>th</sup> ed., Charles Curran (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), p. 53.

<sup>372</sup> Richard M. Gula, “The Moral Conscience,” p. 52.

<sup>373</sup> This elaboration is mine.

<sup>374</sup> Richard M. Gula, “The Moral Conscience,” p. 53.

holistically as an expression of the whole self as a thinking, feeling, intuiting, and willing person. *Conscience is the whole person's commitment to value and the judgment one makes in the light of that commitment of who one ought to be and what one ought to do or not do.*<sup>375</sup>

Like Grisez and Shaw, he thinks that those who see conscience as “freedom from authority” or a “law unto itself” are misguided. He corrected the impression people have regarding the traditional role ascribed to conscience as the “proximate norm of morality” in these words:

This does *not* mean that conscience independently determines what is good and what is evil. Nor does it mean that conscience makes all morality relative to a person's own desires, or that one's moral judgment is true merely by the fact that the judgment comes from one's conscience. It *does* mean that the person's sincerely reflective judgment of what to do sets the boundary for acting with integrity, or sincerity of heart. To say “My conscience tells me” means “I may be wrong, but I understand this to be an objective demand of morality and so I must live by it lest I turn from the truth and betray my truest self.”<sup>376</sup>

He argues that in this latter understanding of conscience, if such a person comes to believe with his whole heart that a particular line of action is “God's objective call,” then that implies moral imperative like Luther's assertion: “Here I stand, I can do no other.”<sup>377</sup> Conscience in this sense, he says, is “where God speaks to us.”<sup>378</sup> And this implies obedience that in turn calls for the proper formation of conscience. He then says that the limitations of our knowledge and experience imply that we cannot form our consciences alone. He broadened the scope of critical inquiry where we seek for counsel – what he called the “established sources of wisdom.”<sup>379</sup> This

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<sup>375</sup> Richard M. Gula, “The Moral Conscience,” p. 53. Emphases are his.

<sup>376</sup> Richard M. Gula, “The Moral Conscience,” p. 53.

<sup>377</sup> Richard M. Gula, “The Moral Conscience,” p. 54.

<sup>378</sup> Richard M. Gula, “The Moral Conscience,” p. 54.

<sup>379</sup> Richard M. Gula, “The Moral Conscience,” p. 55.

includes family, friends, all sources of wisdom in secular society, the academia, Sacred Scripture, and more specifically, the Magisterium.

He argues that the goal of conscience formation is to build good moral character. And since character emerges from our habits, it is therefore important for us to pay attention to the things we do and desire, the company we keep, the goals we aspire to, our role models, the values of our community, among others, since all these affect the choices we make and who we eventually become. He cautioned that even after a careful inquiry, we might still miss the mark as to what is objectively right. The problem of conscience is not about those who inquire and then make erroneous judgments, but those who fail to inform themselves properly. Judgment will be based not on the rightness or wrongness of our consciences, but on the “sincerity of our hearts in seeking to do what is right, even if we make mistakes.”<sup>380</sup> Moral maturity, he says:

If a person spends his or her life doing what he or she is told to do by someone else in authority simply because the authority says so, or because that is the kind of behavior expected by the group, then that person never really makes moral decisions which are his or her own...The morally mature person must be able to perceive, choose, and identify oneself with what one does. In short, we create our own character and give our lives meaning by committing our freedom, not by submitting it to someone in authority...As long as we do not direct our own activity, we are not yet free, morally mature persons.<sup>381</sup>

Evidently, his submission revolves around moral maturity and freedom. And he defines “real” freedom as “learning to live within limits.”<sup>382</sup> The depth of his analyses requires that he goes a step further than the previous authors in placing the burden of the tension between conscience and law, not on any external authority, but on the individual. It is the individual that has the burden of proof that he/she makes a thorough inquiry before arriving at a decision. Such inquiry

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<sup>380</sup> Richard M. Gula, “The Moral Conscience,” p. 57.

<sup>381</sup> Richard M. Gula, “The Moral Conscience,” p. 58.

<sup>382</sup> Richard M. Gula, “The Moral Conscience,” p. 60.

would necessary involve seeking counsel from the teaching authority of the Church. But the decision as to what to do remains with the moral subject. He concludes that unless we take charge of our lives, we run the risk of living an inauthentic life.<sup>383</sup> Perhaps we have space for one or two more theological views.

**Charles E. Curran** developed what he called a “holistic understanding of conscience.”<sup>384</sup> His analyses starts with an overview of traditional Catholic understanding of conscience that places, he seems to suggest, a stress on the conformity of conscience to moral principles and norms. He argues that even though moral principles and norms play a significant role in understanding conscience, there are other subjective considerations that impinge upon the decisions of conscience that ought to be given due consideration. In his view, “the objective and subjective poles of human and Christian morality” converge on conscience and have significant impact on our moral decisions. He examines four possible consciences: the “sincere and true,” the “insincere and erroneous,” the “insincere and true,” and the “sincere but erroneous.”<sup>385</sup>

In exploring the relationship between the subjective and objective poles of conscience in these different possible qualities of conscience, he points out how even the “tradition” supports giving *some* “primacy to the subjective pole of conscience over the objective” pole.<sup>386</sup> He traces the idea of *syneidesis* (as distinct from *synderesis*) to Paul’s understanding of the “heart” that became identified with the “remorse of conscience.” Catholic and Protestant traditions call this

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<sup>383</sup> Richard M. Gula, “The Moral Conscience,” p. 62.

<sup>384</sup> Charles E. Curran, “Conscience in the Light of Catholic Moral Understanding,” in *Conscience: Readings in Moral Theology, 14*, ed., Charles Curran (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), p.14.

<sup>385</sup> Curran, “Conscience in the Light of Catholic Moral Understanding,” p. 4.

<sup>386</sup> Curran, “Conscience in the Light of Catholic Moral Understanding,” p. 4-5.

antecedent and/or consequent conscience respectively. The former stresses the “legislative aspect” (objective pole), and the latter the “juridical aspect.”

He notes the distinction scholastics made between *syneidesis* and *synderesis* - the former is the “judgment act” of conscience, the latter is the “element of the soul that makes us feel our sinfulness and corrects the other elements when they err.”<sup>387</sup> According to him, Aquinas view of *synderesis* is that it is “a habit of practical reason by which one knows the first principles of natural law, and conscience as the act of applying the first principles known in *synderesis* to conduct.”<sup>388</sup> He insists that it was the manualists that put a stress on the legal model where the judgment of conscience was virtually reduced to the conclusions deduced from the general principles and norms known by *synderesis*. However, they also made provisions for a non-deductive alternative approach: what he called “connatural” approach to knowledge that the manualists left undeveloped. This is his point of departure in articulating a “holistic” model of conscience.

The “holistic” model is his attempt to bring the “object” and “subject” poles of conscience together in decision-making but with a priority given to the “subject pole.”<sup>389</sup> While the object pole is the “concrete reality involved in the decision making process,” the subject pole is the personal aspects of the agent making the decision (this involves all dimensions of his personhood: cognitive ability, affective and emotive aspects, and circumstances). What he claims as the priority of the subject is articulated in this way:

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<sup>387</sup> Curran, “Conscience in the Light of Catholic Moral Understanding,” p. 7. He asserts that *synderesis* is a “scribal error” ascribed to Jerome that continues even to Aquinas and the manualists.

<sup>388</sup> Curran, “Conscience in the Light of Catholic Moral Understanding,” p. 7.

<sup>389</sup> Curran, “Conscience in the Light of Catholic Moral Understanding,” pp. 14-15.



In moral decision making the subject pole and the object pole come together, but the subject pole makes decisions in many ways depending on how reason, grace, emotion, and one's intuition are involved in the judgments of conscience. In making conscience judgments individuals will at times apply principles or norms to particular questions. In this context, reason functions in a discursive way.<sup>390</sup>

His elaboration, apart from admitting the role of grace, gives a special role to prudence which he argues ought to “be rooted in the total person and modified by all the virtues of the good Christian.”<sup>391</sup> It involves discernment as an aspect that is not merely intellectual but creative and imaginative. It involves an attention to the affective and emotional dimensions. And it is attentive to the intuitive aspect of the moral subject. He submits that conscience uses reason in “at least three different ways – a discursive deductive way, a connatural way, and a discerning and prudential way.”<sup>392</sup> What is not clear in his analyses is how these come together in specific moral decisions. The distinction he tries to make between the object and subject poles becomes lost in the maize of explanations and examples. He set out to make a “systematic” development of the holistic model, but ended creating the impression that there is utter confusion in the mind of the moral subject. Of course he affirms this complexity:

The holistic understanding of conscience proposed *recognizes the complexity and manifold aspects of decision making*. As significant differences also exist with regard to the object of our decision making, the process of our decision making is somewhat different in different contexts. Judgments about a marriage partner, a vocation to be or do a certain thing, whether or not to move to another city or to take a difficult job, differ from judgments about whether the country should have an all-volunteer army or the feasibility of nuclear power plants. More personal decisions will obviously take into account the particularities of the person; decisions on social issues require knowledge of all the data involved in community decisions and rely less on the

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<sup>390</sup> Curran, “Conscience in the Light of Catholic Moral Understanding,” p. 15.

<sup>391</sup> Curran, “Conscience in the Light of Catholic Moral Understanding,” p. 16.

<sup>392</sup> Curran, “Conscience in the Light of Catholic Moral Understanding,” p. 16.

particularity of the person. *Thus, not all judgments of conscience proceed in the same way but are somewhat determined by the matter under consideration.*<sup>393</sup>

**William C. Spohn** describes conscience as “the still small voice that makes you feel smaller still” and would maintain that there is no “precise definition” for conscience (like rationality, emotion, choice).<sup>394</sup> He however adopts Sidney Callahan’s definition: “Conscience is a personal, self-conscious activity integrating reason, emotion, and will in self-committed decisions about right and wrong, good and evil.”<sup>395</sup> He places emphasis on “anterior conscience” which describes the role of conscience in deliberation before a moral decision. For him, Conscience is a human way of “assessing and judging and not the authoritative voice of God.” Conscience is neither a “direct dictation” from God nor “merely a social construction.” Just as it is distinct from God’s voice, though it could gain resonance from it, so also it rises above the inadequacies and pretensions of social institutions and as such differentiated from it. However, con-science implies a knowledge that is “self-reflexive and socially connected, knowing that is accountable to my deepest self, to human communities, and ultimately to God.”<sup>396</sup> There is “mutual accountability” that comes with living in community – shared standards, visions, and goals. But these need discerning in the light of truth known in one’s heart and before God.

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<sup>393</sup> Curran, “Conscience in the Light of Catholic Moral Understanding,” p. 17. The emphases are mine.

<sup>394</sup> William C. Spohn, “Conscience and Moral Development,” in *Conscience: Readings in Moral Theology*, 14<sup>th</sup> ed., Charles Curran (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), p. 130

<sup>395</sup> Spohn, *ibid*

<sup>396</sup> W. C. Spohn, *Ibid*. p. 131

He asserts that conscience is not a faculty but rather an integral mental operation that begins in “initial sensitivity to moral salience and moves to conscious empathy.”<sup>397</sup> The process of deliberation is obviously complex:

Mulling its options, conscience engages in “crosschecking” of critical thought, empirical possibilities, affective valence, imaginatively grasped analogies, intuitive insight, and social collaboration. Reason tutors emotion and emotion instructs reason; intuition is measured against remembered experience; imagination projects possible scenarios that are evaluated by affective resonance and critical reflection. All of these operations lead up to the act of making a moral judgment with as much freedom and commitment as we can muster. No amount of elaborate crosschecking can manufacture self-commitment. Finally, conscience produces more than individual decisions; *it enters into the self-constitution of the person over time*. Moral choices shape the character of the one who makes them insofar as they integrate personal character or retard moral development. We become what we do.<sup>398</sup>

It is critical to note the stress above for we shall return to it. Conscience does shape our character over time as it guides our choices and decisions. He adopts Timothy O’Connell’s characterization of conscience as capacity, process, and judgment. It is a “capacity” to distinguish right and wrong and is the basis for universal morality. As a “process” it discerns what constitutes right action in unique concrete situations. The skill one brings to this exercise depends on personal experience, social consciousness, personal habits, and maturity.<sup>399</sup> The “judgment” of conscience seeks to achieve “reflective equilibrium of reason, intuition, and emotion,”<sup>400</sup> such that we are obliged to obey that decision even if it is objectively erroneous for that would “violate our personal integrity”. He distinguished “reflecting well” and “acting well.”

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<sup>397</sup> Spohn, *ibid*

<sup>398</sup> Spohn, *ibid*. The stress is ours.

<sup>399</sup> Spohn, *Ibid*

<sup>400</sup> Spohn, *ibid* He cites Sidney Callahan, *In Good Conscience: Reason and Emotion in Moral Decision Making* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), p. 137

The latter calls for virtues like “resoluteness, courage, persistence and passionate attachment to the moral good.”<sup>401</sup> He argues for the need to be willing to review the process of deliberation that led to our decisions especially if this is could harm others or questionable.

Spohn holds that “conscience relies on the quality of the moral group to which we belong.”<sup>402</sup> He agrees that values are transmitted through socialization (better in groups than one-on-one). Values are instilled through repetition and reinforcement in the larger society beyond the family. Therefore, moral neutrality either in families and other institutions is perhaps the greatest disservice to the moral development of our young. Conscience development is stalled or “dulled” if adequate vocabulary are not provided to the young or “dumbed down” into that self-interest, or “desensitized” by unsavory images streaming through the media.

He makes a critique of moral development theories from Freud to Kohlberg. He particularly thinks that American moral development theory is built on Kohlberg’s and Gilligan, with little attention to their significant inadequacies. Kohlberg’s theory focuses on cognition perhaps because it was more measurable but at the detriment of the dimensions of emotion, intuition, and imagination. Gilligan’s assumptions regarding a distinctive feminine approach to morality is neither corroborated by empirical data except otherwise than claimed, nor philosophically justifiable. He concludes with examining the value of virtue ethics as “practices” that shape our life from the inside beyond the claims of psychological theories to a focus on adult formation that is ever ongoing within a community of shared values or belief system (with a stress on the Christian tradition).

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<sup>401</sup> Spohn, *Ibid.* p. 133

<sup>402</sup> Spohn, *Ibid*

**Walter E. Conn** presented a view of conscience that links the need to know with a desire to act – and to act knowingly (rightly) as a goal (an end). The same intuition that propel us to self-transcend to affirm the true, propel us to act truly (even at a detriment to self). Conscience is at the core of the self-transcending progression. The spirit that cognitively seeks for meaning and inquires for truth transforms at the level of moral consciousness into a spirit searching for value and demands “self-consistency in knowing and in doing.”<sup>403</sup> He defines conscience specifically as “the exigency to make our doing consistent with our knowing,” or “the morally conscious self in its drive to go beyond itself,” and more generally, as “the morally conscious self-evaluating, deliberating, deciding in response to the drive of its spirit for self-transcendence in the realization of value.”<sup>404</sup>

He argues with Bernard Lonergan that this drive is for a “transcendental notion of value” that permeates the whole person and “apprehended in feelings.”<sup>405</sup> He adopts Lonergan’s “transcendentals” as “the dynamic ground for questioning” in our search for the intelligible, the true, and the good. They are “transcendental notions” because they are beyond any particular area of questioning (*What is it? Is it so? What must I do about it?*). In practical reflection, we move from questions of fact to that of value and then to possible action as an effort to realize that value. In our effort to understand (what is it?) we encounter the transcendental notion of intelligibility which transforms to that being (is it really so?) and on to that of value (intention or desire for the really good) that lead us to a quest for its realization. He argues that success in this

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<sup>403</sup> Walter E. Conn, “Conscience and Self-Transcendence in the Thoughts of Bernard Lonergan,” in *Conscience: Readings in Moral Theology, 14*, ed., Charles Curran (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), pp. 151-62 at 151.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 156, 181

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid.*

drive for value is a happy conscience and failure is a sad conscience. Though the self is at the center of each drive for self-transcendence, but it is at higher levels of moral consciousness that its significance is more pronounced. My conscience becomes identified with my consciousness: “I *am* my moral consciousness, my conscience.”<sup>406</sup> To question then my moral consciousness or conscience is to question my sense of responsibility and an “attack” on my person, my authenticity, my integrity, my self-worth.

He argues that this “drive for self-transcendence is affective at its very core.”<sup>407</sup> He affirms with Lonergan that “our feelings – joys and sorrows, fears and desires – give our intentional consciousness its mass and momentum, its drive and power.”<sup>408</sup> He holds that at the fourth level of moral consciousness (deliberation and evaluation) or at the intersection between judgment of fact and value we have “an apprehension of value”. In other words, “we grasp value through feelings themselves”.<sup>409</sup> He argues in line with Lonergan that “feelings are the source of values” but given that they are ambiguous, they need to be discerned. If feelings respond to value, they could move us towards self-transcendence. Some feelings are so strong that they determine the direction of life by shaping our “horizons” or the stance we take in life. Feelings are open to development, reinforced by approval or disapproval and given the critical value of feeling in moral consciousness, “enriching, refining, and pruning our feelings is the heart of

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<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.* p. 155

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.* p. 156

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.* p. 156 He argues that feelings respond to values according to “an ascending scale of preference” (vital values, social, cultural, personal, and religious). Religious values are at the heart of ultimate fulfillment or meaning.

moral education.”<sup>410</sup> Finally he examined the structure of the human good. The ultimate aim in our quest for value is its realization – what he calls terminal value. As individuals we seek our goals through particular goods and as person living with others, we cooperate with other to achieve common goods of order. Conscience is the exigency for a self-transcending drive in the realization of value. Given the claim of centrality of feelings in moral consciousness, we need to examine further the role of feelings in human behavior.

### 2.3 Conscience: The Role of Feelings in Moral Behavior

There is an obvious attempt in recent theological literature (as seen above) to integrate the role of feelings in our understanding of conscience. This is refreshing because, Sidney Callahan rightly observes the prevalence of “the automatic dismissal and neglect of emotion” in Western moral tradition.<sup>411</sup> Charles Curran, William Spohn, Richard Gula, Walter Conn, among others, all agree on the need to integrate the aspect of feeling to our understanding of conscience. We shall revisit Callahan on this topic but let us first hear Gula again to underscore the need for this section:

Conscience includes not only cognitive and volitional aspects, but also affective, intuitive, and somatic ones as well. We understand the moral conscience holistically as an expression of the whole self as a thinking, feeling, intuiting, and willing person. *Conscience is the whole person's commitment to value and the judgment one makes in the light of that commitment of who one ought to be and what one ought to do or not do.*<sup>412</sup>

We agree with the authors that have expressed the need for a holistic model of conscience – a model that takes cognizance of the “affective, intuitive and somatic” dimensions of our

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<sup>410</sup> *Ibid*, p. 158

<sup>411</sup> Sidney Callahan, *In Good Conscience: Reason and Emotion in Moral Decision Making* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), p. 95

<sup>412</sup> Richard M. Gula, “The Moral Conscience,” p. 53. Emphases are his.

personhood. They also see conscience as setting “the boundary for acting with integrity, or sincerity of heart.”<sup>413</sup> It is not merely our “rationality” but also our “moral sensitivity” that sets us apart from other animals like the well-organized and socialized cousins, the chimps. Sidney Callahan stresses that “*wholehearted commitment* to the good and right is what distinguishes moral decisions of conscience from other kinds of decisions.”<sup>414</sup> He devotes some space to addressing the “importance of emotions to a sense of self,” what he calls the “emotive bedrock of self-consciousness that constitutes the self.”<sup>415</sup> He laments the “suspicion” that attends to the idea of “emotion” in Western intellectual history (from Plato to the present). While he identifies the “heart” as the metaphorical home of emotions/ feelings, however, he observes that emotion is often dismissed as “dangerous” and “irrational” as contrasted to the “mind” the metaphoric seat of rationality, and even links it to gender differentiation.<sup>416</sup> This bifurcation between mind and heart has created a major problem for Western morality for it creates an internal difficulty in ascribing value or significance to emotions, or the “heart” in decision making. This anomaly is now in need of urgent attention because the reality is that the “heart” is more significant to determining our behavior than we ordinarily admit. Of course those who hold this view (or anything like it) have in the past been criticized for “endorsing romantic irrationality.”<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>413</sup> Gula, *ibid*

<sup>414</sup> Callahan, *In Good Conscience*, p. 95

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>416</sup> Feminists have helped us understand the “irrationality” of ascribing rationality to masculinity and emotionality to femininity. The need for rationality to dominate the emotions as males dominate females is at best a pathetic “reasoning” model. See Robin May Schott, *Cognition and Eros: A Critique of the Kantian Paradigm* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988); Robert C. Solomon, *The Passions* (New York: Anchor Books, 1977) both cited in Callahan, *In Good Conscience*, p. 96

<sup>417</sup> Callahan, *ibid.*, p. 96



Callahan cites Dostoevsky who wrote in his notebook referring to a botched assassination attempt by a Russian terrorist in 1878 that:

What is moral is not completely decided by the simple concept of consistency with one's conviction, because sometimes it is more moral not to follow one's convictions...one stops short, because of some feeling, and does not complete the act. One curses oneself and feels contempt, but feeling, that is, conscience, prevents one from completing the act.<sup>418</sup>

According to Callahan, Dostoevsky not only identifies conscience with feeling but considers a powerful emotion or feeling could inhibit an action on the scale of an assassination attempt.

Uncovering how to develop such "feelings" among current terrorists will certainly attract huge investment. Perhaps this is the reason for a renewed interest in conscience. Nevertheless,

Callahan is privy to Milan Kundera's caveat on elevating feelings to the level of "value and truth" given the inherent dangers of national sentiments or patriotism ("love") used as

justification for great atrocities.<sup>419</sup> Of course this constitutes a core objection to emotions being used to justify actions. It is considered unpredictable, and irrational. Negative emotions leads to crimes and other atrocities, positive emotions give rise to "mistaken sacrifices and misguided altruism."<sup>420</sup> Emotion not only beclouds reason but actually hinders our commitment to universal norms of justice. St. Ignatius and Kant built moral traditions on the repudiation of emotions and inclinations. Kant's extreme view of inclinations (emotions, intuitions, passions) as lacking moral value is best captured below in his argument regarding the command to love:

Undoubtedly in this way also are to be understood those passages of scripture which command us to love our neighbor and even our enemy. For love as an inclination cannot be commanded; but beneficence from duty, when no inclination impels us and even when a natural and unconquerable aversion opposes such beneficence, is practical, and not pathological, love. Such

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<sup>418</sup> Callahan quotes Aileen Kelly, in *The New Republic*, 23 April, 1984, p. 30 See, *In Good Conscience*, p. 96.

<sup>419</sup> Callahan cites Milan Kundera, "An Introduction to a Variation," *New York Times*, 6 Jan. 1986

<sup>420</sup> Callahan, *In Good Conscience*, p. 97.

love resides in the will and not in the propensities of feeling, in the principles of action and not in the tender sympathy; and only this practical love that can be commanded.<sup>421</sup>

Callahan notes that currently ethicists and philosophers maintain the view that sentiments should not be admitted to moral reasoning except with extreme suspicion and even with rigorous analysis they should always be under “careful rational superintendency.”<sup>422</sup> We do not object to this caveat in relation to emotions. But Callahan argues that the suspicion and subsequent rejection of emotion in moral valuation is hinged on false presuppositions:

Unfortunately, modern moralists’ suspicions of emotion are based upon a particular psychological model of human functioning that has not changed much over the past centuries. There is an assumption, first, that reasoning can be thoroughly detached from emotion; second, that only detached reasoning will be reliably objective; and third, that emotions will only bias, cloud, and impede moral decision making. Recent psychological approaches to reason, emotion, and their interactions cast doubt on these presuppositions.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by James W. Ellington, Hackett Publishing Company, 1981, reprinted in *Morality and the Good Life, Op. Cit.*, p. 274-6. Kant argues that morality is not determined by its purpose (end) or its effects but by the internal principle of volition upon which it is based irrespective of the inclination of the agent. In fact inclination has no moral value. Its presence devalues the moral objectivity of the act. He provides four examples in distinguishing acting in conformity with duty and acting from duty. Firstly, he identifies actions done which are obviously contrary to duty (lying, stealing, among others). Secondly, he identifies actions performed in accord with duty but without an immediate but a mediate inclination (a certain personal interest that motivates the action such paying taxes to avoid punishment). Thirdly, he identifies actions that conform to duty but has immediate inclination thereof (not committing adultery because one truly admires and loves one’s wife). Fourthly, he identifies actions done in conformity with duty with no underlying inclination but rather a contrary inclination to act (like not committing adultery even though one’s wife is a shrew).<sup>421</sup> It is this last one that reveals properly the nature of the “good will” and the distinction between acting in conformity to duty and acting from duty. While this last provides the test case for the possibility of the goodness of the will, Kant does not advocate Puritanism or anything close to it since he believes that life provides us opportunities to exercise “goodwill” than seeking out situations that make it possible (we do not have to marry a shrew to practice conjugal fidelity). The true goodness of the will is revealed in the tension between duty and inclination rather than otherwise. An act of duty that coincides with inclination is amoral, while the act of duty that is opposed to inclination is moral. Therefore the beneficent man is not one who finds pleasure in spreading joy around through his generosity, but rather, it is the one who contrary to his inclinations, acts beneficently as a duty. Even though preservation of life is a duty we all owe ourselves, but this act is amoral due to the inclination to it. This basic principle could be used to clarify the “moral worth” of other virtues. He thus distinguishes “practical love” and “pathological love” (as above) to make the same point.

<sup>422</sup> Callahan, *ibid.* p. 99

<sup>423</sup> Callahan, *ibid.* p. 99

Callahan points to new studies on human consciousness that support his claim. He argues that studies indicate consciousness is “colored” or “charged” or “heated by” feeling to distinguish the depths of its intensity and identity with the subject.<sup>424</sup> He observes that “hot cognitions” is another name for emotions because they “move us, they press, they motivate.”<sup>425</sup> Daniel Goleman underscores this point in the current edition of his book, *Emotional Intelligence*:

The view of human nature that ignores the power of emotions is sadly shortsighted. The very name *Homo sapiens*, the thinking species, is misleading in light of the new appreciation and vision of the place of emotions in our lives that science now offers. As we all know from experience, when it comes to shaping our decisions and our actions, feeling counts every bit as much— and often more— than thought.<sup>426</sup>

Emotions are considered the “primary motivating system for all activity” adapted for human survival such that they “infuse cognitive processing with subjective meaning;” and, for the specific goals of this research, it “makes empathy possible”<sup>427</sup> and ensures we “feel guilt” for behaving in an inappropriate manner. Moreover, when our cognition is “charged” with feeling, we own our actions, are personally involved rather than indifferent or apathetic, but committed or invested in our action. It is then possible to argue that feelings not only imbue our actions with meaning but the capacity to “feel” is crucial to our sense of being “human.” Imagine living with someone who neither laughs, feels excited about anything, nor shows a sense of fear, joy, or any

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<sup>424</sup> Callahan, *ibid*, p. 100 He claims that “hotter consciousness” implies a closer affinity to the center of self. He links the “qualitative difference in consciousness” to an “activation of limbic system” (brain pathway) involving biochemical reactions and other physiological changes (face and muscular reactions may occur).

<sup>425</sup> Nico H. Frijda, “The Laws of Emotion,” in *American Psychologist*, Vol. 43, no. 5:351 cited by Callahan, *ibid*.

<sup>426</sup> Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition* (Kindle edition: Random House, 2012), pp. 4-5. He says, “I take emotion to refer to a feeling and its distinctive thoughts, psychological and biological states, and range of propensities to act. There are hundreds of emotions, along with their blends, variations, mutations, and nuances.” He went on to list eight primary emotions and their variations (fear, anger, sadness, enjoyment, love, surprise, disgust, shame). See Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: 10th Anniversary Edition, Ibid.* p. 287.

<sup>427</sup> Callahan, *ibid*

emotion. At some point you will begin to doubt if the person is really human. How would you even relate to the person since “relationship” has more to do with *feeling* than with *thinking*.

A distinction is made between positive and negative emotions to show how the former “moves” one towards its objects and the latter “moves” one away from it. If we love somebody or something, we are drawn towards the object of our love and vice versa. The fact is emotion “induces” movement.<sup>428</sup> The notion of being “drawn” describes not merely an attraction, but is basic to the “movement” or motivation (including *physical movement*) towards that object and extends even to the effort to protect and preserve that which we love. Conversely, when we hate something or someone, we “withdraw” or tend to avoid the object of our hatred. The notion of “withdrawal” is basic to other emotions that “hatred” elicits and extends to the desire or effort to eliminate or destroy that which we hate. We have all experienced both emotions and they help us understand how emotions are said to be “movers” or significant influences to our actions or behaviors. Political campaign and consumer product ads industry is built totally on the premise that emotions do significantly influence our actions. They appeal to our emotions than to reason.

Moreover, current research shows the integral relations between thought and feelings such that pure thought without the feeling component makes our cognitive experience barren of meaning.<sup>429</sup> This is proven in cases of persons suffering from *alexithymia*, the incapacity to express feelings as a result of a dysfunction of the *amygdala*.<sup>430</sup> An example is Gary. He has a

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<sup>428</sup> Callahan, *Op. Cit.* p. 102

<sup>429</sup> Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, p.13

<sup>430</sup> Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, p. 15 and 50 He adds: “The amygdala acts as a storehouse of emotional memory, and thus of significance itself; life without the amygdala is a life stripped of personal meanings. More than affection is tied to the amygdala; all passion depends on it.” *Ibid.*, p. 15

high IQ, cognitively brilliant, but was “emotionally blind” because he experiences “no angers, no sadnesses, no joys.”<sup>431</sup> Theorists like Goleman argue that, “our feelings have a mind of their own;” sometimes they could act independently of our rational mind.<sup>432</sup> However, it is preferred that they work together for a healthy human functioning. He puts it this way:

The connections between the amygdala (and related limbic structures) and the neocortex are the hub of the battles or cooperative treaties struck between head and heart, thought and feeling. This circuitry explains why emotion is so crucial to effective thought, both in making wise decisions and in simply allowing us to think clearly.... Consider, too, the role of emotions in even the most “rational” decision-making. In work with far-reaching implications for understanding mental life, Dr. Antonio Damasio, a neurologist at the University of Iowa College of Medicine, has made careful studies of what is impaired in patients with damage to the prefrontal-amygdala circuit. Their decision-making is terribly flawed— and yet they show no deterioration at all in IQ or any cognitive ability. Despite their intact intelligence, they make disastrous choices in business and their personal lives...<sup>433</sup>

Insights from researches like Damasio’s has given rise to opinions that “emotional intelligence” is an area critically needing development as that of cognition.<sup>434</sup> We note however that tracing emotions to the amygdala and its limbic circuits does not imply emotions are merely “physically” circumscribed. As brain processes are said to constitute the matter but not the form of consciousness, so also the material processes within and around the amygdala constitute the matter and not the form of feeling. However, if the matter is impaired, the form will be distorted. Therefore, injury to the amygdala results in impairment of certain emotions that it serves as a

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<sup>431</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>432</sup> Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, p. 20; Callahan cites those who hold that there is a “rational non-conscious mind operating below awareness” that induces us to emotional reaction. Goleman addresses this point. See Richard Lazarus, “Thoughts on the Relations between Emotion and Cognition,” in Scherer and Ekman, *Approaches to Emotion*, 247-57; Howard Leventhal, “A Perceptual Motor Theory of Emotion,” in Scherer and Ekman, *Approaches to Emotion*, 271-91.

<sup>433</sup> Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, p. 27-28

<sup>434</sup> Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*,

conduit. Its role is primarily instrumental analogous to the role of wires for electricity. As our brain matter is not our thoughts, so amygdala is not our feelings. The “form” our thoughts or feelings take depends on other variables. In both cases, the *moral quality* of our *thoughts* and/or *feelings* is its direct link with conscience.

We agree with Callahan’s observation that psychological work on emotion is very new and therefore yet to be integrated into philosophical and theological reflections.<sup>435</sup> Part of the contribution of this research is to *highlight* the need to develop further the link between conscience and feeling. We strongly affirm that “feeling” is to conscience what “logic” is to reason. This view does not undermine the fact that conscience involves the application of reason. However, our experience shows that the “force” of conscience has little to do with reason or logic but everything to do with feeling. We do not mean here the *authority* of conscience as the absolute norm of subjective morality, but rather its “persuasive influence” or “power” over our actions and behavior. We consider this a significant distinction if we are to understand the influence of conscience on human behavior.

Conscience is often considered “impotent” in influencing behavior precisely because of the “impotency of reason”<sup>436</sup> in influencing behavior. However, if the subtle but powerful influence of feelings on our behavior, as noted above, is taken into account, the conclusion will be different. Conscience is associated with all the emotions Goleman noted above: fear, anger,

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<sup>435</sup> Callahan, *Op. Cit.* p. 95

<sup>436</sup> David Hume was the first to articulate this “impotency” in his *Treatise on Human Nature*, London: John Noon, 1739, reprinted in *Morality and the Good Life: An Introduction to Ethics Through Classical Sources*, edited by Robert C. Solomon and Cancy C. Martin (New York: McGraw-Hill Company, 2004, p. 206-220.

sadness, enjoyment, love, surprise, disgust, shame but it is often identified with fear and shame and only negatively so. But the multiple influence of conscience on our behaviors involves the emotions of *fear, anger, sadness, joy, empathy, and shame*. Our capacity to feel these emotions in relation to morally distinct actions is at the heart of our character formation. It is a healthy part of socialization that citizens have a healthy “fear” of contravening the law. Lack of “fear” for the law is part of the symptoms that describe psychopaths and deviants. That fear acts as an “internal sanctions” along with the feeling of shame and/or guilt that are the consequences of acting contrary to acceptable behavior. We feel sad when we are remorseful of our acts. Inability to feel fear, shame, guilt, or sad has far reaching implication not just on our behavior patterns but on who we become. Psychopaths do not feel these emotions because they either have no functional conscience or more appropriately, because the “feeling aspect” of conscience is undeveloped. They lack “empathy” for the same reasons. Obviously this needs further study. We shall examine shame and guilt in the next section. But before we do, let us highlight certain insights that could help in the philosophical development of the link between conscience and feeling.

We all know what it feels like to be “disappointed,” or feel “dissatisfied” with someone or something. Perhaps we know how the hunger for pleasure, the feeling of loss, the desire to know the truth or to avoid embarrassment could drive our actions in different directions. Are these not *natural propensities* or *inclinations* in us?

The fulcrum upon which Aquinas theory of natural law and of the virtues (and by implication, his moral theory) revolves is around his idea of “natural inclinations” (such inclinations like the desire to live, to avoid pain, to desire the good, to know the truth, to enjoy

beauty, among others).<sup>437</sup> It is not only that these inclinations reveal to us the law of nature, but also that they are inclined to obey reason. However, in our fallen state, there is a disorder in our inner constitution such that our inclinations could revolt against reason. The idea of a virtuous life is to alert us of the need to live an ordered life – a life “in accord with reason”. And he defines moral virtue as “*a habit of choosing the mean appointed by reason as a prudent man would appoint it.*”<sup>438</sup> We have seen above how these virtues are under the guidance of prudence, and conscience is itself like a lamp for prudence. There cannot be a functional virtue of prudence without an active conscience. They are mutually complementary; while conscience as “capacity” (*synderesis*) holds priority of place, conscience as “process” is often identified with the role of prudence. The role of conscience as judge (accusing) often leaves us with a *feeling of inadequacy, feelings of shame and guilt*. These feelings are now considered by some psychologists as a necessary part of healthy development.<sup>439</sup>

Though Aquinas’ theory of action is essentially intellectual, but it admits of the role of *feelings* in moving the will. He admits explicitly that the “lower appetite” (our passions) could move the will even necessarily depending on the hold it has on reason.

Sometimes, however, the reason is not entirely engrossed by the passion, so that the judgment of reason retains, to a certain extent its freedom: and thus the movement of the will remains in a certain degree. Accordingly, in so far as the reason remains free, and not subject to the passion, the will’s movement, which also remains, does not tend of necessity to that whereto the passion

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<sup>437</sup> John Paul II affirms that “natural inclinations do not acquire a moral quality, except insofar as they are connected to the human person and to his authentic realization.” See *Veritatis splendor*, *Ibid.* n. 50.

<sup>438</sup> Aquinas, *S. T. I-II*, Q. 59, a. 1 The stress is his, and he is here quoting Aristotle’s definition of it in *Ethics*, *ii.* 6.

<sup>439</sup> See M. L. Hoffman, “Affect and Moral Development,” in *New Directions for Child Development* 16, ed. D. Cicchetti and P. Hesse (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982). M. Kaufman, *The Brain in the News*, November 12, 1999 (Vol. 6, No. 19). Washington, D.C.: The Dana Press, cited by Michael J. Boivin, “Feeling Humans and Social Animals: Theological Consideration for an Evolutionary Account of Human Emotion,” in *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, Vol. 29: 4 (2001): 314+;



inclines it. Consequently, either there is no movement of the will in that man, and passion holds its sway: or if there be a movement of the will, it does not necessarily follow the passion.<sup>440</sup>

Aquinas is a student of Aristotle on this point. Aristotle holds that “mind and appetite” together can originate local movement.<sup>441</sup> Our experience and research concur on the influence of passions and sentiments on behavior.<sup>442</sup> This only confirms what philosophers like Hume affirmed long ago but was highly criticized for asserting that reason is a slave to the passions.<sup>443</sup> He identified social consensus (“agreeableness and approval”), happiness, and utility as underlying principles for moral action, but eventually reduces all these to an ultimate universal principle: what he identifies as the “social sympathy in human nature” as constituting the “end

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<sup>440</sup> Aquinas, *S.T. I-II*, Q. 10, a. 3

<sup>441</sup> Aristotle asserts in *De Anima* that, “Both of these then are capable of originating local movement, mind and appetite: 1. Mind, that is, which calculates means to an end, i.e. mind practical (it differs from mind speculative in the character of its end); while (2) appetite is in every form of it relative to an end: for that which is the object of appetite is the stimulant of mind practical; and that which is last in the process of thinking is the beginning of the action. It follows that there is a justification for regarding these two as the sources of movement, i.e. appetite and practical thought; for the object of appetite starts a movement and as a result of that thought gives rise to movement, the object of appetite being to it a source of stimulation. So too when imagination originates movement, it necessarily involves appetite.” *BK. III, chapter 10*, 433a, 17-20.

<sup>442</sup> See, Michael J. Boivin, “Feeling Humans and Social Animals: Theological Consideration for an Evolutionary Account of Human Emotion” *Ibid.*; A. R. Damasio, *The feeling of what happens: Body and emotion in the making of consciousness* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999); M. L. Hoffman, “Affect and Moral Development,” in *New Directions for Child Development* 16, ed. D. Cicchetti and P. Hesse (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1982).

<sup>443</sup> David Hume, in his *A Treatise on Human Nature* asserts: “Whatever, therefore, is not susceptible of this agreement or disagreement is incapable of being true or false, and can never be an object of our reason. *Now, it is evident that our passions, volitions, and actions, are not susceptible to any such agreement or disagreement; being original facts and realities, complete in themselves, and implying no reference to other passions, volitions, and actions.* It is impossible, therefore, they can be pronounced either true or false, and be either contrary or conformable to reason. This argument is of double advantage to our present purpose. For it proves *directly* that actions do not derive their merit from a conformity to reason, nor their blame from a contrariety to it; and it proves the same truth *indirectly*, by showing us that as *reason can never immediately prevent or produce any action by contradicting or approving of it, it cannot be the source of moral good and evil*, which are found to have that influence. Actions maybe laudable or blamable, but they cannot be reasonable or unreasonable: laudable or blamable, therefore, are not the same as reasonable or unreasonable. The merit and demerit of actions frequently contradict, and sometimes control our natural propensities. But reason has no such influence. Moral distinctions, therefore, are not the offspring of reason. ***Reason is wholly inactive, and can never be the source of so active a principle as conscience, or a sense of morals***.”<sup>443</sup> The latter stress is ours. See *Treatise on Human Nature*, London: John Noon, 1739, reprinted in *Morality and the Good Life: An Introduction to Ethics Through Classical Sources*, edited by Robert C. Solomon and Cancy C. Martin (New York: McGraw-Hill Company, 2004, p. 206-220.

(and beginning)” of all ethical inquiry.<sup>444</sup> He considers reason as “inactive” in influencing moral behavior as such if contrasted to conscience (“a sense of morals”) that is dynamic. He insists that morality is not an object of reason but of feeling or sentiment (emotion or passion).

But can there be any difficulty in proving that vice and virtue are not matters of fact whose existence we can infer by reason? Take any action allowed to be vicious – willful murder, for instance. Examine it in all lights, and see if you can find that matter of fact or real existence which you call *vice*. In whichever way you take it, you find only certain passions, motives, volitions, and thoughts. There is no other matter of fact in the case. The vice entirely escapes you, as long as you consider the object. You never find it till you turn your reflection into your own breast and find a sentiment of disapprobation which arises in you towards this action. Here is a matter of fact; but it is the object of feeling, not of reason. It lies in yourself, not in the object. So when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it.<sup>445</sup>

Despite the many objections one could level against Hume’s views above, the insight he leaves us with is the central place he gives to feelings in his moral theory. He underscores this “feeling” as part of our natural constitution; he equates it with “conscience” or “a sense of morals” that finds its origin in “social sympathy” (as a necessity consequence of living with others).

While Aquinas could be used to correct Hume based on the idea of virtues that reigns-in the unruly passions, it does not diminish the import of his insight. However, “passions” here are not to be understood wholly negatively. Aquinas affirms that “the passions, considered in themselves, are referable both to good and to evil, for as much as they may accord or disaccord with reason.”<sup>446</sup> Hence, it includes empathy, fear, and other emotions we listed above.

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<sup>444</sup> This adapts the summary critique offered by Robert C. Solomon and Cancy C. Martin, *Morality and the Good Life: An Introduction to Ethics Through Classical Sources*, edited by Robert C. Solomon and Cancy C. Martin (New York: McGraw-Hill Company, 2004, pp.205-6.

<sup>445</sup> Hume, *Ibid*, p. 211

<sup>446</sup> Aquinas, *S.T. I-II, Q. 59, a.1*

J.S. Mill is another eminent philosopher that considers feelings as central to both the notion and power of conscience to influence actions.<sup>447</sup> He says:

This *feeling*, when disinterested and connecting itself with the pure idea of duty, and not with some particular form of it, or with any of the merely accessory circumstances, *is the essence of conscience*, though in that complex phenomenon as it actually exists, the simple fact is in general all encrusted over with collateral associations derived from sympathy, from love, and still more from fear; from all forms of religious feeling; from the recollections of childhood and of all our past life; from self-esteem, desire of the esteem of others, and occasionally even self-abasement... *Its binding force, however, consists in the existence of a mass of feeling* which must be broken through in order to do what violates our standard of right, and which, if we do nevertheless violate that standard, will probably have to be encountered afterwards in the form of remorse. Whatever theory we have of the nature or origin of conscience, this is what essentially constitutes it.<sup>448</sup>

Again, there are several possible objections to Mill's views on the origin and nature of the phenomenon of conscience, but we have to concede to him that "its binding force" consists in the "mass of feelings" associated with its presence. Now, "binding force" here is not about the *authority* of conscience (as subjective norm of morality) but about its *capacity* to influence our actions. In the next segment we shall distinguish between the neurotic and normal feelings (of

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<sup>447</sup> J. S. Mill conceives Conscience as an "internal sanction of duty" that could be identified as "a feeling in our mind" in form of pain following upon a violation of duty and in some serious cases could force us to desist from a certain act. Mill admits that this "ultimate sanction" of morality is a subjective standard for each particular act – "a conscientious feeling of mankind." He however affirms that this internal sanction has no binding force on those who do not possess this feeling and *neither would any form of morality have a hold on them except through external sanctions*. He points to experience as proof to the force of this feeling on those cultivated in it. He proposes the cultivation of conscience based on principles of utility. This supports his view that *external sanctions complements and consolidates internal sanctions*. He disregards the question of whether our feeling of duty is innate or acquired but affirms that the "regard for the pleasure and pains of others" should constitute an innate component if such is possible. However, he asserts that even if "moral feelings" are rather acquired than innate, it does not make it any less natural than speech or reason are "natural" to man. Like these faculties, the moral feelings, if not natural, can like them be developed over time to a high degree such that it becomes spontaneous like speech or reasoning. We are inclined to agree with this line of reasoning and it supports a primary argument we shall be making in subsequent chapters that proper formation of conscience and character is community based. See, J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, edited by George Sher, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. In *Morality and the Good Life* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004, pp. 315-351. The stresses are ours.

<sup>448</sup> J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism, Ibid.*, p. 340-341

guilt) that affirms the presence of an active conscience. **Frederick Nietzsche** built his theory of conscience on “neurotic guilt”. Though he concedes the power of “feelings” associated with conscience, calls it the “dominant instinct” but he eventually reduces it to *feelings of guilt* (a neurotic guilt) which is nothing but internalized desire for self-flagellation. He therefore reduces all of conscience to “bad conscience” that we must rid ourselves of in our development.<sup>449</sup> He and Freud agree on this and probably helped to usher in the age that views conscience as a psychological baggage that needs trashing.

Part of the reason conscience was rejected in the last century up-till now stems from a reduction of all feelings associated with conscience to guilt, and particularly to neurotic guilt. *We have underscored the fact that not every feelings associated with conscience is about guilt.* Conscience provides us with good feelings about our self-worth and dignity. It promotes our self-esteem by praising us when we do something good. It encourages us to strive towards realizing our ideal self. It encourages by counseling us about the value inherent in promoting the goods of community and thereby promoting good relationships in society. **Charles M. Shelton** identifies “seven dimensions of conscience” (adaptive psychic energy, healthy defensive functioning, guilt, idealization, empathy, self-esteem, teleology)<sup>450</sup> that provides a deeper understanding of the different roles of conscience in our development.

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<sup>449</sup> Nietzsche asserts, “This instinct for freedom forcibly made latent – we have seen it already – this instinct for freedom pushed back and repressed, incarcerated within and finally able to discharge and vent itself only on itself: that, and that alone, is what a bad conscience is in its beginnings.” See *Genealogy of Morals*, p. 87.

<sup>450</sup> Charles M. Shelton, *Morality of the Heart*, p. 90-91. He argues that “adaptive psychic energy” is the “psychological fuel” for healthy development. Conscience helps us spend this fuel wisely. Healthy defensive functioning is necessary for proper navigation of complex life situations – sublimation and altruism are mechanisms of conscience for healthy adaptation. Guilt, if unhealthy, is crippling; but guilt in itself is “integral for healthy conscience functioning” and is “vital to moral growth.” Idealization is a critical aspect of conscience that pumps our hopes and dreams towards ideals and help actualize our potentials by “framing metaquestions” like, “what do I

The critical point we need to highlight is that often conscience is understood as *not* influencing behavior because our emphasis is its cognitive aspect – the discerning of right and wrong. People who do not care about right and wrong do not have to bother about what their conscience says.<sup>451</sup> This is the reason for denying conscience influence in our behavior. But beyond this role, *conscience's most significant influence on our behavior is more subtle because a part of it is embedded in the sub-conscious (as internalized values), as part of who we have become, our sense of selfhood and self-worth, our dignity, our name, is more a feeling-we-feel than a thing-we-know. As such, its influence on our choices and actions are not just significant but superlatively so.* It is not by accident that many philosophers came to the same conclusion that “social sympathy” is the primordial basis for morality. It is the same intuition that compels some traditions (including the Biblical tradition as noted earlier in this segment) to relate conscience to the “heart.” In many traditions (including Africa as we shall see) the “heart” is the seat of feelings and all that is good about the whole human person. The heart is the seat of conscience in these traditions because they conceive “conscience” as the soul of the human heart – that which provides it with its essential quality – the capacity *to feel*. Therefore, to be “hardhearted” is to have no feeling, and no conscience.

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dream for?” “what am I becoming?” Empathy is critical for responding to life situations and for bonding indispensable for shared experience and moral growth. Self-esteem is a sense of inner worthiness or goodness that is essential for inner scrutiny and growth. Teleology provides us with the reason for doing anything. This “telic dimension” is a pivotal role of dimension that challenges us to provide reason for what we do and ensures we are responsible in our actions.

<sup>451</sup> See Robert D. Hare, *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us* (Kindle Edition: Guilford Press, 1999) Location, 904. Hare argues that conscience is an internal sanction without which external sanctions lose their power for as he puts it: “this inner voice and the internalized norms and rules of society act as an “inner policeman,” regulating our behavior even in the absence of the many external controls, such as laws, our perceptions of what others expect of us, and real-life policemen.” *Ibid*

The only qualification that this study helps us now to make is that though “feeling” is as central to conscience as “deliberation” but just as not all deliberation involves conscience, not all feelings involves conscience as well. It is the *moral quality* of both the feeling and deliberation that distinguishes acts of conscience (both in feeling and cognition). And as we have seen above, it is more appropriate considering the two processes as integral to the one act of conscience even though they are distinguishable. A boy travels 5 miles to fetch water for a poor childless widow before going to school each day. The *deliberative process* that led to the decision and action to fetch water for her is obviously distinct from the *feeling of empathy that precedes and accompanies that deliberation*. Experience tells us that it was more the *feeling of empathy* that motivated the boy’s action rather than the deliberative process. But taking the two inner processes as one composite process, integral to the external action makes it a wholesome human event – a dynamic psycho-physical event – involving mind and heart, body and spirit (the whole person in a single act of love). At the center of that event is the conscience. If it was not present, the beauty of this act of love will be lost to our world. That is the tragedy of the death of conscience, and every effort aimed at diminishing its development or formation is a fatal wound to the heart of human civic life in any culture.

#### **2.4.0 Shame and Guilt: Pathologies of Conscience**

Is it reasonable to argue that Philosophy and psychology seem to have conspired in Western scholarship, as the foregoing shows (via Freud and Nietzsche), to reduce the notion of conscience to a pathology?<sup>452</sup> We have maintained that this reductionism misrepresents the facts

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<sup>452</sup> We noted above how Nietzsche considers conscience a mal-adaptation; for him “bad conscience” (identified with the sense of guilt) is the result of a repressed need for self-flagellation. For Freud it is repressed “social angst” (part of which is “castration anxiety”).

in a reconstructed and holistic view of conscience. A holistic view of conscience is one that integrates thought processes and feeling in its conceptualization. It admits that the capacity for “feeling” is an essential part of a healthy development. Therefore, the capacity to feel shame and guilt constitutes part of healthy human development than otherwise.

Aristotle considered shame as a quasi-virtue. He defined it as “a kind of fear of dishonor” that produces an effect similar to that evoked by “fear of danger.”<sup>453</sup> It is rather a “feeling than a state of character.” He however argues that this “feeling” is normal for youth who need its restraint given their many errors. An older adult does not need this feeling precisely because “he should not do anything that need cause this sense.” His argument is that the adult “good man” should be so formed in virtue that the case does not arise that he performs a disgraceful act: for “it is a mark of a bad man even to be such as to do any disgraceful action.” A “good man will never voluntarily do bad actions.”<sup>454</sup> For him then, shame is a “conditional” good; it is an inner restraint for those not yet formed in virtue. But should a “good man” ever act contrary to good reason, “he will feel disgraced.”<sup>455</sup> However shame is not a virtue as such.

**John Rawls** describes shame as the “feeling that someone has when he experiences an injury to his self-respect or suffers a blow to his self-esteem.”<sup>456</sup> He makes a distinction between

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<sup>453</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. IV, chapter 8 (1128b:10) in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Modern Library, 2001), p. 1001

<sup>454</sup> Aristotle, *Ibid*

<sup>455</sup> Aristotle, *Ibid*

<sup>456</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 388. He defines “self-respect” as a primary good that includes “a person’s sense of his own value, his secure conviction that his conception of his good, his plan of life, is worth carrying out...and implies a confidence in one’s ability, so far as it is within one’s power, to fulfill one’s intentions.” See Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, *ibid.* p.386

shame as *natural* and *moral* emotion.<sup>457</sup> The former is a feeling of shame for personal defects or “blemishes in our person” (like physical features) or our acts that manifest such defects which we and other significant persons in our lives consider we are entitled to have.<sup>458</sup> The latter is feeling shame for lacking certain moral qualities or “excellencies” (virtues) that one is expected to have (by self and others) depending on one’s “plan of life.” He holds that we feel shame “relative to our aspirations, to what we try to do and with whom we wish to associate.”<sup>459</sup> We feel moral shame when if we lack requisite virtues for our chosen “plan of life”. Basically moral shame is the pain we feel for real or imagined loss of self-respect and/or the esteem of others given our life orientation. He distinguishes between shame and guilt<sup>460</sup> but we prefer Martin Buber’s account of guilt because he distinguishes between “neurotic” and “existential guilt.”

**Martin Buber** argues that Freud and his psychoanalytic theory denied the “ontic character of guilt” but rather reduced its source to ancient and modern taboos – the fear of parental and society punishments. Guilt is reduced to a ‘need for punishment’ or “moral masochism” and finds support in the sadistic superego.<sup>461</sup> As these external mechanisms of control is internalized morality is born and having conscience as its watchdog. He then

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<sup>457</sup> He says “shame springs from a feeling of diminishment of self” and distinguishes between shame and regret. The latter being a feeling of pain for the loss of any good but the former has a more “intimate” or special connection with our person and those upon whom we depend for affirmation of our self-worth.

<sup>458</sup> Rawls, *ibid*

<sup>459</sup> Rawls, *ibid*

<sup>460</sup> He argues that mere expectation of punishment may explain fear or anxiety but not guilt. Reference to harm or disadvantage that one experiences for past actions may explain “regret” but not guilt (not even remorse). He considers fear and anxiety that often accompany guilt as not “moral emotions”. A moral feeling is distinguished from natural emotions in that experiencing it “invokes a moral concept and its associated principles.” When we narrate its experience it is always in reference to an “acknowledged right or wrong.” Rawls, *ibid*. pp. 421-22

<sup>461</sup> Martin Buber, “Guilt and Guilt Feelings,” in *Conscience: Theological and Psychological Perspectives*, C. Ellis Nelson, ed. (New York: Newman Press, 1973), p. 225



distinguishes “neurotic guilt” from “existential guilt”. Neurotic guilt is that guilt feeling that has no basis for it; it is “groundless” as differentiated from “authentic guilt” (guilt feelings that are based on reality) finding intensification in “existential guilt” that arises as a consequence of our morally reprehensible actions in relationship with others.<sup>462</sup> He argues that while therapists may tend to heal the “neurosis” of guilt, they cannot heal nor should they try to heal existential guilt for it falls beyond their practice. Existential guilt is the result of injuring the order of human relationships. It is only the person who inflicted that wound that can heal it.<sup>463</sup> Guilt is then an essential part of human development for the proper ordering of human relations/society. Perhaps the distinctions made by E. M. Pattison provide even more clarity on the subject.

**E. M. Pattison** distinguished four categories of guilt: 1. civil objective guilt; 2. Psychological subjective guilt-feelings; 3. Existential guilt; 4. Ontological guilt.<sup>464</sup> Civil objective guilt is impersonal and may have no reference to objective norms of morality. A person may be convicted as objectively “guilty” of an “offense” like sheltering Jews who were being persecuted in a Nazi regime. Psychological subjective guilt feelings he argues to be “an affect” – “the subjective experience of internal condemnation of one’s superego.” According to him “guilt feelings” has no necessary link to either civil objective guilt or to the existential ego guilt.<sup>465</sup> Existential ego guilt is “a violation of the relationship” and reflects a “denial” of one’s values and commitments to others for the sake of certain narcissistic advantages. He considers

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<sup>462</sup> Buber, *Ibid.* pp. 229, 232

<sup>463</sup> Buber, *ibid.* p. 232

<sup>464</sup> E. Mansell Pattison, “The Development of Moral Values in Children,” in *Conscience: Theological and Psychological Perspectives*, C. Ellis Nelson, ed. (New York: Newman Press, 1973), p. 238-262 at 248

<sup>465</sup> E. M. Pattison, *ibid.* p. 248

this guilt as not a feeling but a situation.<sup>466</sup> He identifies “ontological guilt” with original sin – implying by this “man’s basic responsibility for his life and behavior.” He calls it a “situation, a reflection of man’s awareness of what he is.”<sup>467</sup> This domain is not open to treatment by the psychotherapist. He argues that psychotherapists have been trying to reduce guilt feelings while neglecting “existential guilt situation.”<sup>468</sup> He considers morality less about “guilt feelings” than it is about existential guilt – our relationship commitments. He noted the conscious and unconscious dimensions of our choices as worthy of attention but maintains the reality of our freedom. He affirms we are “responsible for everything that we are and do” and distinguishes between superego moralism that degrades the self (makes it “feel” guilty) and ego morality that affirms the self as having integrity such that it admits its guilt (“I am guilty”).<sup>469</sup>

Evidently, Pattison creates an unnecessary dichotomy between consciousness of guilt and its feeling. In an attempt to posit “objectivity” of “existential guilt” he neglects the fact that a cognitive understanding of guilt in this distinction is non-recognizable without its psychological component: the *feeling* aspect. But we agree with his conclusions: that instead of focusing on assuaging our “feelings” of guilt, to rather focus on its external causes – healing the rupture in the relationships we have commitments to; for as he argues, “[t]he resolution of guilt feelings does not change the basic violation of relationship which is existential guilt.”<sup>470</sup> In other words, even if we manage to calm our feelings, the objective “guilt” of our reprehensible actions

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<sup>466</sup> Pattison, *ibid.* pp. 248-9

<sup>467</sup> Pattison, *ibid.* p. 249

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>469</sup> Pattison, *ibid.* p. 251

<sup>470</sup> Pattison, *ibid.* p. 251

remains in need of healing. It is for this reason that some psychologists are now saying, if we hurt somebody, it is necessary that we “feel” guilt because it ensures we be careful next time.<sup>471</sup> To be insensitive to such feelings is not just abnormal but dangerous to human relationships and society.

**Hanna Arendt** affirms that “the inability to feel moved” or an inability “to think from the standpoint of someone else” is itself pathological.<sup>472</sup> **Steven J. Bartlett** in his phenomenal study of human evil argues forcefully that what is needed to bridge the yawning gap between moral reasoning and moral action is an “affective cement” that bonds to efficaciousness.<sup>473</sup> Part of the “affective cement” we need to change certain patterns of unhealthy behavior is a healthy “sense of guilt” for that behavior. Its intensity ensures a quicker transition to new behavior.

The pathology associated with “guilt” is as a result of “neurotic guilt” (a guilt feeling that has no basis in reality, as noted above). Our experience with mentally sick people shows the reality of this form of guilt. Freud and Nietzsche however reduced all guilt feelings (of conscience) to “neurotic guilt” and thereby confused us by blurring the distinctions. Though Freud recognized the social value of “guilt” as an internalized mechanism for social order (in conformity to social demands based on fear of consequences should one act otherwise, a form of “civilized self-interest”), he still considers it a “repression” of personal instincts and desires that ought to be overcome as one matures. What Freud fails to realize is the integral nature of social

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<sup>471</sup> Charles M. Shelton agrees that guilt is psychological tightrope because if experienced too intensely, it has a crippling effect but “to deny the experience of guilt deprives one of a naturally occurring psychic experience whose function nourishes sensitivity and altruistic response.” See *Morality of the Heart*, p. 91.

<sup>472</sup> Hanna Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969), p. 64

<sup>473</sup> Steven J. Bartlett, *The Pathology of Man: A Study on Human Evil* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C Thomas Publishers Ltd, 2005), p. 280

relationships for the realization of the goals of personhood. By viewing the individual as sharply distinct from the community, and whose goals are sharply or diametrically opposed to that of the community, he fails to realize that without the community to create the context for the realization of the goals of all, the individual will not exist as such. The formation of the individual to conform to the goals that foster community does not need to be interpreted as a “frustration” or “repression” of individual goals but a “growing up” to attain one’s fullest potentials. Guilt in this dynamic is a vital form of growing up to one’s responsibility as a human person – someone that lives with others. Since we all live with others (in society) *we therefore need to be capable of feeling guilt to be truly and fully human.*

#### **2.5.0 Conscience Formation: The Significance of Perception of Moral Atmosphere**

In this research “moral atmosphere” describes the norms and values shared by a given community of agents (as family, group, or community). Therefore individual “perception” of “moral atmosphere” refers to knowledge of such norms and values by the individual agent. The moral quality of the “norms” and “values” are relative to the community’s universe of meaning but open to evaluation as to its objectivity. Kohlberg is credited to have first used this term to explain the link between individual competence in moral reasoning and behavior.<sup>474</sup> An important distinction is that “moral atmosphere” is about individual perception of *shared* norms and values within a given community. It is not about the “perception” of the group. If the moral atmosphere is perceived as low, then the moral climate is considered as capable of affecting the individual negatively. If it is high, it affects the individual positively. The negative impact of

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<sup>474</sup> See Marianne S. de Wolff and Daniel Brugman, “Moral Atmosphere and Moral Behavior: A Study into the Role of Moral Atmosphere for antisocial behavior,” in *The Development and Structure of Conscience*, Willem Koop, Daniel Brugman, et al eds. (New York: Psychology Press, 2010), p. 136.

perception of moral atmosphere on the individual is a tendency to minimize rather than maximize their moral competence due to group pressure.<sup>475</sup>

We agree to a certain extent with William Spohn that the quality of our Conscience depends on the social group we belong to (the kind of family units, school attended, other social units, ethnic or cultural group) for “values are transmitted through groups.”<sup>476</sup> Psychologists are yet to reach consensus as to the significance of moral atmosphere for behavior at different levels of moral formation: for example, the perception of moral atmosphere is more significant for the family than it is for the school.<sup>477</sup> Wolff and Brugman research conclusions include “Moral competence did not moderate between perceived moral atmosphere and moral behavior.”<sup>478</sup> They cite other sources to support this conclusion. In other words, it is highly probable that a person with good moral judgment will adopt the values of the group he identifies with even if those values are low on his personal scale. This conclusion only supports what we already know by experience captured by the adage: “bad company corrupts morals.” Evidence from research shows that community consensus of “what constitutes value” is more critical predictor in influencing behavior patterns or change among adolescents.<sup>479</sup> The implication of this will become clearer in chapter four when we consider the moral roots of systemic corruption.

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<sup>475</sup> See A. Colby and L. Kohlberg, *The Measurement of Moral Judgment. Vol. 1: Theoretical foundation and research validation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), cited by Wolff and Brugman, *Ibid*

<sup>476</sup> William Spohn, “Conscience and Moral Development,” p. 133. He cites Timothy O’Connell’s claim in *Making Disciples: A Handbook of Christian Moral Formation* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), pp. 170-172

<sup>477</sup> Marianne S. de Wolff and Daniel Brugman, “Moral Atmosphere and Moral Behavior: A Study into the Role of Moral Atmosphere for antisocial behavior,” in *The Development and Structure of Conscience*, Willem Koop, Daniel Brugman, et al eds. (New York: Psychology Press, 2010), p. 146

<sup>478</sup> Wolff and Brugman, “Moral Atmosphere and Moral Behavior,” p. 147

<sup>479</sup> Spohn, “Conscience and Moral Development,” p. 137

There was once a deplorable sight on TV where a mother (caught on security camera) actually employs her kids to effectively steal jewelry and other items in a mall. It is obvious that the moral atmosphere in the home where these kids are raised is corrosive for conscience formation regarding rights to property. It is equally true of a community that awards titles to its sons and daughters who are notorious for embezzling public funds except that part of the funds were used to promote some local interests. We shall examine this further in chapter four.

There is no theological debate as to the significance of “moral atmosphere” for conscience formation precisely because it is considered a given.<sup>480</sup> A healthy moral atmosphere promotes proper formation of conscience because it upholds objective standards of behavior. A parent sees some pencils he/she did not buy for the son/daughter and asks “whose is it?” If there is no satisfactory explanation given, he/she says, “I want you to return it to wherever it came from.” The moral atmosphere this creates for the child is that it is not alright to keep what does not belong to you. An unhealthy moral atmosphere is one where values are skewed towards personal and/or group interests to the detriment of objective standards. For an example, James belongs to a tribe “A” and is a lecturer in a federal university in a multi-tribe nation in a developing world like Nigeria. He gives “handouts” for his course (this is a highly profitable racket that bleeds the students in Nigeria of today). Each student pays a lot of money for these “handouts” except for any of James’ students who happens to come from his village. Each semester there are usually between 5-8 students from his town that take his course. The other students are from different tribes. These “other” students resent this racketeering and even more the favoritism part of it, but they have little choice here. If they do not comply, they fail the

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<sup>480</sup> This is a functional terminology found in socio-behavioral psychology. Theology has no equivalent terminology but does consider the moral quality of the social environment vital for character formation.

course. Back home, James is one of the elites of the town. His “handout” racket has made him rich. The villagers know the story of the “handouts” but are very pleased their sons and daughters are singled out for special favor. So when James visited home, his village chief offered him a title in recognition of his “benevolence” to his people. His “virtues” were extolled during a festive ceremony as the community celebrates the “achievements” of one of their sons, presenting him as a “hero,” a “virtuous son of the soil” worthy of emulation. Objectively, James has no “virtues” as such or a very twisted one at best. So, it is presumed that celebrating a man of questionable “virtue” ought to yield a low moral atmosphere for each young person present at that ceremony. It also points to a deeper problem: Is it possible that this community has a different notion of “virtue?”

Though it is difficult assessing the exact impact of a single event like the above on the moral formation of persons from this community, but this difficulty does not diminish its significance. While research data will help illumine the significance of individual perception of moral atmosphere for moral formation, but its theological importance does not depend on such conclusions because there is a significant difference between controlled experiments and deeper real life situations; between scientific conclusions and theological ones. Common sense tells us not to expose young children to certain adult “practices” because we know *intuitively* that it will influence them even if we do not have “scientific evidence” to back that up. When a group of people define “virtues” and “vices” based solely on “self-interest” or “group-interest” and would promote that as “right conduct,” this poses a major problem for conscience and morality.

Interestingly, this practice is more universal than one would ordinarily think (for these are primarily “utilitarian” principles that you will find as standard practice in unexpected places). It

might help finding out if this skewed notion of virtue is *deliberative* or *instinctive*. A *deliberative stance* is one founded on solid philosophical principles or assumptions arrived at after a critical assessment of all its merits and demerits in the light of some form of objective standards. An *instinctive stance* is the opposite of the above. It is an un-reflected response to life situations without deep thought as to its long term implications except that it “benefits” me/us in the short term. Is it then possible that the story above captures in essence the significance of “moral atmosphere” for conscience formation?

The individual perception of the “moral atmosphere” is viewed here as critical to formation of conscience because it reinforces in the individual whatever “values” the moral community encourages or discourages. Given that we cannot hope to legislate our way to morality, and no nation has limitless capacity for application of external sanctions, the imperative for developing internal sanctions becomes not just obvious but a profitable public policy initiative in the long run. This has been the vital role of religion in every culture. Now that religion is breaking down, the only veritable social mechanism for developing this inner sanction is threatened. Developing a healthy moral atmosphere is critical to reinforcing the development of internal sanctions. That is precisely what conscience is – an internal sanction for right living.

### **2.6.0 An African View of Conscience?**

Is there a coherent and homogenous African view of conscience? We cannot answer in the affirmative to this question. Perhaps someone should do a systematic study of the notion of Conscience among African tribes. That will be a daunting but most rewarding task for scholarship. At present, what we have is a laudable ongoing attempt to articulate the notion of conscience among different African peoples/tribes by African theologians. We deeply commend



their efforts. It is arguable however that there exists a common feature in these notions comparable to the notion of “community” among Africans (we shall examine this in the next chapter). It is this common feature we shall seek to identify. Given that the notion of conscience is linked to personhood and community in African perspective of this term, we shall only attempt to identify the basic contours of this notion in this segment and leave its fuller development (formation of conscience in relation to community) in the next chapter.

Ferdinand C. Ezekwonna who wrote a book on this topic claims simply: “most African traditional religions have the concept of conscience as located in the heart.”<sup>481</sup> He then proceeded to examine the notion of conscience among the Igbo of Nigeria who, according to him, use “Obi” (heart) as synonymous to conscience. The Igbo also use “uche” and “ako” to represent “mind” and “prudence” respectively. We may add here that among the Igbo, a *prudential heart* is a *conscientious heart*. Ezekwonna submits that “obi ocha” ((clean heart) and “Obi ojôo” (ugly heart) are equivalents to “good” and “bad” consciences respectively. The “guilt” of conscience is described as the “obi n’apia ya utali” (the “heart is flogging” the person).<sup>482</sup> He then claims that “individual conscience for Africans should be the conscience of the community and the community conscience becomes that of the individual,” since “Obi” is the nexus between individual and community.<sup>483</sup> Obviously there is a difficulty in this claim. Is there an identity between the individual and what he calls “community conscience?” There seem to be. He argues that the “child is expected to act within the conscience of a particular

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<sup>481</sup> Ferdinand C. Ezekwonna, *African Communitarian Ethic: The Basis for the Moral Conscience and Autonomy of the Individual* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2005), p. 191

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid*, cites Metuh Emefie Ikenga, *Comparative Studies in African Traditional Religions*, p. 235

<sup>483</sup> Ezekwonna, *Ibid*. pp. 191-2

community.”<sup>484</sup> He however follows Abanuka’s distinction between “customary” and “community” consciences. The former is when someone follows the dictates of the community out of fear and the latter out of conviction.<sup>485</sup> He also admits with Abanuka that someone who acts with due reflection on the laws and weighs the consequences of his actions is more helpful to the community than if otherwise. So the notion of community conscience neither destroys individual conscience nor autonomy. Before we examine another African author’s perspective on conscience we recall here the claims of Ezekwonna:

[T]he conscience of community is not just blindly following the law which makes people think that the community overrules the individual conscience but one has to question and reflect on it with the community and when he acts, having the interests of all at heart, then he is acting with a community conscience. It is in this connection that Africans believe that the internalization of the external voice of the community or authority by the individual is what makes him begin to tell himself this is good and that is bad. Therefore conscience is not innate in human beings but formed in every stage of the person’s life.<sup>486</sup>

Bénézet Bujo articulates an African notion of conscience that maintains the close link between individual conscience and the “conscience” of the community. However, his analysis that promises to offer more clarity as to the distinction between the two ends seems to blur the very notion of African view of conscience. Bujo contrasts the Western notion of conscience that stresses *radical individualism* in decision making and that of Africa that stresses *radical communalism*. The African ethic is profoundly communalistic such that the individual cannot be understood apart from the community. Therefore the notion of conscience shares the same traits. He posits the “word” as central to the life of the community. Africans believe in the power of the

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<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 192-3

<sup>485</sup> B, Abanuka, *A New Essay on African Philosophy* (Enugu, 1994), cited by Ezekwonna, *Ibid*

<sup>486</sup> Ezekwonna, *ibid.* p. 194

word to nourish or destroy the community. The word does not “vanish” because it comes from the “heart” of the *speaker* (not the *writer*) and carries with it life giving or death dealing powers. The African not only hears the word but “eats” it such that it is part of the person – and the person is part of the community. The community transcends the living to include the “living dead” called “ancestors.” The good word is “eaten” and “digested” within the community through the agency of representatives and/or elders (sages) who help ensure the vitality of the word in communion with the ancestors. What constitutes the ethical life revolves not on individuals but on the community since “thinking” is essentially “relational.”<sup>487</sup>

So Bujo considers the “word” at the heart of conscience. Given that moral decisions are not merely individualistic but profoundly communal, the entire community is involved in solving moral problems through “palaver” (communicative dialogue).<sup>488</sup> Even in very personal decisions, the individual always acquiesces to the views of the community. The “palaver” or what we prefer to call a “communal moral dialogue” is never aimed at some abstract truth but to seek wisdom that has an “existential importance” in securing the life of the community.<sup>489</sup> It is for this reason

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<sup>487</sup> For the foregoing see Benezet Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community: The African Model and the Dialogue between North and South* (Kenya: Pauline Publications, 1993), pp. 70-2

<sup>488</sup> Albertine T. Ngoyi describes African “Palaver” as “a dialoguing institution of unlimited domain. African tradition functioned along the axis of the dialogue. The palaver was an institution in its own right, not a transitory activity. It was, and still is, a stable institution with its own rules, one of which, dialogue is essential. Every participant is a dialoguing partner with full powers to demand to speak and to do so for as long as is necessary. It is not just idle talk; everybody is bound to listen. In traditional Africa there was no autonomous religious, economic, judicial, educational, or moral authority. All the authorities came under the dialoguing institution. African life revolved about the axis of the dialoguing institution with unlimited domain.” In “M. Tshiamalenga Ntumba: A Philosopher Attentive to the Problems of African Theology” in *African Theology: The Contribution of the Pioneers* (Limuru, Kenya: The Pauline Press, 2008), pp.163-181, at 172

<sup>489</sup> Bujo, *ibid.* p. 77

that Bujo argues that the African ethic does not operate with the classic principle of synderesis: “Do good and avoid evil,” but proceeds from “promote life and avoid killing.”<sup>490</sup> He summarizes

What then is conscience from an African perspective? It is about talking with and listening to one another. The ear, which has a similar function as that of the female sex organs, takes in the semen of the word and lets it penetrate deeply into the human person. In the human depth, the word is turned into life or death according to the inner states of the individual. The word, which was transformed in the depth of the human person, has to prove itself true and be successful in confronting other words, expressed by different members of the entire community. The word of the individual has to prove its innocence in public. During the process of talking and listening to each other, the word which brings death is rejected, whereas the one which promotes life is confirmed and integrated into the service of the community. What the community refuse or confirms through palaver, with the active participation of those concerned, merits respect, lest the individual should expose him/herself and the community to death.<sup>491</sup>

We consider the above “definition” as radically different from Ezekwonna’s view.

However, Bujo’s perspective above stresses the “sociology of knowledge” most evident in all African ethics. Conscience serves the community through open dialogue that does not seem to have any absolutes as to what the “true good” is. It has to be discovered through dialogue in the light of what serves the community best. This sounds very much like a pragmatic model of the “true” and the “good”. It has very deep implications in terms of what constitutes “value,” the “true,” or the “good”. In other words, the most direct implication to this research of this notion of conscience is perhaps its *radical relativism* of the “true” and the “good”. What constitutes the “truly good” is whatever serves the community best. This does not mean that the individual is unnecessarily sacrificed for the community because as Bujo claims, “it owes its life force to the single members.” Rules are not imposed by the community on individuals because “consensus”

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<sup>490</sup> Bujo, *ibid*

<sup>491</sup> Benezet Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community*, p. 78. E. E. Uzukwu, a reader for this research, notes that Bujo source is “Ogotomelit: Griaule, M. Conversation with Ogotomeli (London: Oxford Press, 1965). This perhaps might be an editorial oversight on Bujo’s part.

is the critical core of palaver (dialogue). Therefore individuals are at liberty to share their insight into any problematic prior to reaching a decision as to what constitutes “right decision and action”.<sup>492</sup> This is a radical departure to Western view of both moral decision making and/or conscience.

However, Bujo thinks the African approach “prolongs and completes” the Western model that has birthed radical individualism with its sharp distinction of “objectivity” and “subjectivity” to the detriment of inter-subjectivity and communal dimension of moral decision making. The difficulty with this notion is how it responds to the same critical assessment of social-learning theories of moral development we have noted in the first section. It is evident that African ethical theories are open to the same critique of “prudential considerations” and “ego-protection” as noted in our earlier critique. Bujo however elaborates on the merits of his model.

He argues in relation to conscience that the ecclesial dimension in the formation of conscience is a critical component that the African communalism could help retrieve.<sup>493</sup> The Holy Spirit, he argues, is the giver of truth. And this Holy Spirit is not an exclusive preserve of any individuals as such but given to the Community. Therefore the search for ethical norms and what constitutes right moral conduct is a community and/or ecclesial effort and mandate such that *Lumen Gentium* (a Vatican II document) would note that the ecclesial community (enjoying “a supernatural appreciation of the faith – *sensus fidei*”) cannot err as a body “in matters of faith and morals.”<sup>494</sup> The individual is counseled never to take arbitrary “decisions of conscience” but

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<sup>492</sup> Bujo, *ibid.* p. 80

<sup>493</sup> Bujo, *Ibid.* p. 80 He argues, citing Aquinas, that the grace of the Spirit is given for the service of the community and not for individual

<sup>494</sup> Bujo, *Ibid.* cites *Lumen Gentium*, no.12.

always in consultation with the community of believers (often as represented by its leadership). What this supposedly “African model of conscience” offers is the absolute priority and centrality of dialogue in relation to knowledge of the truth/good at all levels of ethical problematic.

Laurenti Magesa explains that the African “ethical consciousness” is essentially a religious one. The African believes in the inter-connectivity of everything that exists; both animate and inanimate beings are suffused with the “life force” that mediates God’s blessings and/or curses (through events, people, and things). The moral codes are embedded in the “traditions” of the people, and these “traditions” have a deeply sacred character. In the African mind “being” and “doing,” are interchangeable. So, understanding that ‘the ontologically good is the ethically good’ can one appreciate and understand the moral sense of the African and the direction of ethical pursuit.”<sup>495</sup> He singles out “hospitality” and “greed” as the quintessential “good” and “bad” respectively in African moral consciousness. Both underscore the critical value of whatever promotes or destroys life of the community. He did not directly write on conscience but highlights the important role of shame and guilt in African moral psychology. The two are not sharply distinguished as in the West where shame is associated with “being” and guilt with “feeling.” The former is assumed to go deeper than the latter. He argues:

In African Religion, however, guilt and shame interpenetrate so closely that , even if we accept Bradshaw’s distinction, it is understood that “feeling” results intrinsically and radically from “being,” and “being” leads ineluctably to “feeling” and “doing.” Thus, it is not possible for a person to have done wrong if there is nothing wrong with the person. An individual with evil eye harms others because he or she is evil. Indeed, if a certain individual has made a mistake, to a certain degree that same person is a mistake. Being and doing cannot be divorced in the African understanding of things. Guilt in African Religion, then, is the psychological/moral stage of

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<sup>495</sup> Laurent Magesa, *African Religions: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), p. 58 He cites Adegbola, “The Theological Basis of Ethics,” in K. A. Dickson and P. Ellingworth, eds., *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs* (Maryknoll, New York: Obis Books, 1969), p. 118.

development where a person “owns up to” personal worthlessness or shame. Shame is the primary factor in the recognition and confession of guilt.<sup>496</sup>

He argues, citing Agnes Heller, that the disorders that are often associated with shame in Western categories<sup>497</sup> are the result of wrongdoing that also affirms one as worthless. But these conditions need to be permanent conditions since with admission or confession of guilt relevant rituals or remedies will heal these conditions when the “shame” is removed. They distinguish “shame of the face” from “shame of the heart or soul;” the former is light, the latter deep. To sleep with an in-law is light shame but to commit incest is deep shame that needs ritual cleansing.<sup>498</sup> Each community establishes the specific values or codes that when contravened brings shame to individuals or groups. The “fear” of being put to shame is an internalization of the external “sanctions” or “taboos” and a critical part of moral formation. While the “eye of others” maybe considered as a form of “externalized” sanctions, but its real force is an internalized fear of shame and its consequences (especially fear of being ostracized).

Therefore, to ignore the role of shame in African moral formation is to ignore totally its critical role in moral development. For this reason, we think that one disservice that the deliberate or accidental “Westernization” of Africa has done (and still ongoing) is that it

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<sup>496</sup> Magesa, *African Religion*, *ibid.* p. 170

<sup>497</sup> John Bardshaw argues that “Shame is the source of the most disturbing inner states which deny full human life. Depression, alienation, self-doubt, isolating loneliness, paranoid and schizoid phenomena, compulsive disorders, splitting of the self, perfectionism, a deep sense of inferiority, inadequacy or failure, the so-called borderline conditions and disorders of narcissism, all result from shame. Shame is a kind of soul-murder. Once shame is internalized, it is characterized by a kind of psychic numbness, which becomes the foundation for a kind of death in life. Forged in the matrix of our source relationships, shame conditions every other relationship in our lives. Shame is a total non-self-acceptance.” See J. Bradshaw, *Bradshaw on the Family – A Revolutionary Way of Self-discovery* (Deerfield Beach, Florida: Health Communications, 1988), p. 2. Cited by Magesa, *ibid.* p170-171

<sup>498</sup> Magesa, *Ibid.* p. 172

mediates the erosion of some vital African traditional “values” - one of which is the traditional mechanism of moral sanctions. An uncritical assimilation of Western ethical or religious and socio-cultural system of thought has given rise to a gradual erosion of such critical values like *shame* without which our own moral fabric collapses. Hence *we affirm the need to retrieve critical elements in the traditional system of shame in Africa if we are to recover or retain our fast vanishing deepest values*. African ethical system is communalistic and without a system of shame in place the entire edifice crumbles precisely because individual conscience has little meaning or force apart from the mechanism of community shame or sanctions. If active, they complement and reinforce each other; if passive, both fail.

The near fusion between individuals and community creates an inner hiatus between conscience (as an internal sanction) and “community conscience” (an external sanction) enforcing ethical behavior through the mechanism of shame rather than guilt. Perhaps it is right to affirm that for Western ethics “guilt” is big, and “shame” small; but for Africans, “shame” is big and “guilt” small. If we are right, then, imagine why the Christian ethical model that stresses the individual (in reference to sin, confession, and virtue) is a difficult “fit” for African mindset and therefore needs serious theological reconstruction. The difficulty will be how to integrate the helpful elements of Westernization with “healthy” aspects of African communalistic ethics. We say “healthy” because there are obvious problems with African communalistic ethics that will be identified in the next chapter.



## 2.7.0

### A Critical Synthesis of Chapter Two

We will now attempt a critical synthesis of the salient points made in this chapter. Freud presents conscience as an internalized “social angst.” We have argued that by forcing a distinction between the “conscience” and the “ego-ideal” Freud was unable to articulate a holistic and more positive view of conscience that not only *reproves* but also *approves*. If the “ego-ideal” is viewed as the positive aspect of the same reality (of conscience) it will not only edge it closer to the theological notion of conscience but will transform the negative connotation associated with “repression” given that the contents of “ego-ideal” are as “internalized” as the contents of “conscience.” This would reconstruct Freud’s wholly negative view of conscience such that instead of reading the social angst (the reproofs that gives rise to conscience) as “repression,” *upverts* or reverses to “elevation” precisely because they are primary lessons in *self-transcendence* and therefore represent a *symbolic moment* in the *growth* of the individual.

So, instead of “repression” we prefer the term “symbolic elevation” for it captures the experience of “growth” at all levels during this time: physiologically (bipedalism is a unique symbolic form here), cognitively, emotionally, morally, and spiritually. We argued above that the real “repression” would be the *stifling* of the capacity for selflessness and empathy (if the id is given an unrestricted expression),<sup>499</sup> and research shows these are the roots of the moral sense.<sup>500</sup> We have argued that stifling the potentialities for selflessness and/or empathy implies

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<sup>499</sup> We have seen the catastrophic results of experimenting with giving the *id* all it wants among youths and young adults: drugs addiction, sexual promiscuity, alcoholism, to name but few. It is unimaginable how social relationships could be forged without a mechanism to discipline the *id*. Without social relationships there would be neither family nor society as we know it.

<sup>500</sup> See “Chapter One” of this research.

raising person with a *disabled* conscience – those who cannot *feel bad* about hurting others.<sup>501</sup>

Another name for such people is *psychopaths*. They have no conscience and cause so much pain.

What we find consistent among the psychological theorists apart from Freud is an early effort to wean the child from infantile self-fixation towards the interests in others or what Adler calls “social interests”. We argued that this self-transcending effort is at the core of the development of conscience and morality. Erikson describes it partly as the “capacity” to find oneself as one loses oneself in others or to redefine oneself by including others. We agree with Adler that the degree we are capable of including others in our interests – or making the interest of the larger whole our interests, to that degree does the individual or culture experience development. We consistently hold that the development of this capacity is the critical role of conscience.

Piaget and Kohlberg helped consolidate the foregoing by highlighting the integral relationship between cognitive and moral development. We highlighted how these two cognitive structuralists underscored the role of feelings in the notion and development of conscience.

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<sup>501</sup> Dr Maggie Mamen, a clinical psychologist that has worked with children for 20 years says this: “In the field of children’s mental health, there appears to be an even more disturbing trend than simply the behavioral and societal consequences of raising a generation of overly indulged youngsters. Many of these children, before they enter my office to have the magic wand of therapy waved over them, have already been diagnosed by well-qualified, experienced medical or mental health practitioners as having a recognizable, identifiable psychiatric disorder, such as depression, anxiety, attention deficit hyperactive disorder, bipolar disorder, and the ubiquitous oppositional defiant disorder. A psychiatric diagnosis of any kind carries with it many implications, not the least of which is that the disorder must have some biological or neurological basis, and can thus potentially be treated biochemically. The number of prescriptions for psychotropic medication for children is increasing astoundingly, despite the fact that their central nervous systems are still developing rapidly, and the long-term effects of these medications are unknown”. Excerpts from *The Pampered Child Syndrome*:  
<http://www.tvoo.org/TVOOrg/Images/tvoresources/DDBCDBBE-AF7E-77E6-9CBE911BDA4B0BB1.pdf>. Accessed on August 14, 2012

While Piaget affirms it originates from “feeling” of respect and/or social sympathy, Kohlberg considers “feelings” in form of “perception of moral atmosphere” at the heart of conscience formation. While we noted in our general critique the problem with claims to a universally applicable invariant structure of moral development, nevertheless, we admit a progression in moral development as a fact of our experience. Kohlberg claims that those at lower levels of moral development act out of fear of punishment while those at higher levels act out of self-condemnation. Most of the Western authors reviewed in this study seem to share this view.

However, social learning theorists like Bandura made a sweeping critique of all psychological development theorists for reductionism and for manipulating experiments to predetermined goals. Their insight highlights the significance of other aspects of human experience like “affects” and “environment” in moral development that are rather neglected by psychological theorists in favor of the cognitive apparatus.

We argue that internal and external factors all play a part in the development of conscience and morals. We singled out the role “affect” or “emotions” play as a vital part of the human moral formation (particularly the formation of conscience) that has been overlooked. We explored the significance of emotions/affect as “drivers” of human behavior. Providing a link between affect and conscience underscores the latter’s significance for shaping behavior at deeper levels than incidental decisions. Most of contemporary theologians we reviewed show an increasing interest in admitting the role of feelings (affect or emotions) in the understanding of conscience. This is a clear departure from traditional and classical views of conscience that is solely cognitive (the intellect without regard for the role of emotions).

The theological analysis of the notion and nature of conscience found in Vatican II document, and the Catechism shows evident inadequacies and ambiguities. We did not address ourselves to finding a solution to these ambiguities since our concern is neither with “objectivity” of norms (as found in the relationship of law to conscience) nor with the possible “errors” of conscience. We are rather concerned with searching for the influence that conscience has on behavior. Research indicates that cognitive maturity neither guarantees moral maturity nor behavior change. We prefer to argue that cognitive maturity and emotional intelligence (maturity) harness the powers of conscience for transformative behavior. Obviously Aquinas notion of conscience we examined does not lead us to this conclusion. He however admits with Aristotle the power of “emotions” to determine our choices and actions. Other theologians (Callahan, Curran, Spohn, Gula, Conn) philosophers, psychologists, and neuroscientists, provide insight for retrieving the role of emotions in the conceptualization of conscience. We acknowledge the problems associated with the notion of “emotion” in morality. We however insist that an accurate (not necessarily adequate) notion of conscience should give a central place to “feeling” because that is precisely what is at the very core of this phenomenon (conscience). If you remove “feeling” (*feeling* good or bad) from it, the notion becomes meaningless.

Given that conscience is often identified with pathological guilt, we examined the notion of guilt as an “emotion” and differentiated “neurotic” guilt from “existential guilt”. We affirm that we need to *feel* “existential guilt” to be truly human and to live in society with others. Our analysis of “shame” distinguishes it from “guilt” to underscore the uniqueness of African moral tradition built on “shame” rather than “guilt.” Given the close affinity between individuals and community in Africa, the notion of conscience finds its full expression in the community

conscience. Therefore, it is not *internal sanctions* (“individual conscience”) but *external sanctions* (“community conscience”) that operate through the mechanism of “shame” that is at the heart of African moral formation. This is a significant input of our research and one that has serious implications. We insist at the end of this chapter that a retrieval of some form of a traditional system of shame in Africa is an imperative for moral development even if this means leaving it vulnerable to an obvious critique. Our response to such a critique will be addressed in subsequent chapters.

## Chapter Three

### Conscience and Community: Socio-Moral Conditions and Conscience

#### Formation

#### 3.0 Introduction to the Chapter

One of the most disturbing reality of the last 50 years is the *systemic corruption* that crippled (or still crippling) most African nations (and much of the developing world) since their independence. In many cases, this led to violence, unstable governments, and even failed states. But while the consequences of corruption and poor leadership have been essentially contained within the respective nations in form of underdevelopment, the reverse is the case with respect to the corruption and unscrupulous leadership evident in the developed world.

At present, the world economy is yet to recover from the prime mortgage crisis that started in the United States in 2008 and reverberated around the globe. There is universal consensus that it was *individual* and *cooperate greed* that nearly brought the world economy to its knees. Millions lost their life savings, homes, and businesses. Even whole nations (Iceland, now recovered, Greece, and Spain) were or are teetering on the verge of insolvency. One of the rescue measures put in place to solve the problem was “new regulations” that were hurriedly formulated and voted into law, in the United States Congress, to check runaway greed. The question this raises is obvious: “is it an effective measure to legislate our way to morality?” The obvious answer is “No”. In the last chapter we insisted that external sanctions can only complement, but never replace internal sanctions. Moreover, recent events show that these regulations have little “teeth” given the loopholes inherent in the regulations themselves ensured

by interest lobby groups in the United States congress. This is similar to the cabals whose “interests” have contributed in no small measure to the underdevelopment of Africa.

When a social system encourages individual or even special group interests to trump an evident Common Good (or overall interests of the whole)<sup>502</sup>; then, what is the guarantee that such a society or community will not self-destruct? If the “interests” of a few opportunists have rendered Africa comatose for decades *in a society that boasts of communalism* (a stultifying paradox) what is the real hope for an African future development? If individual and cooperate greed orchestrated a global recession, what is the hope that the world will not experience another depression in the nearest future (with unfathomable consequences) given that “individualism” remains the cornerstone of modern capitalism? If the fate of billions of people is left to individual decisions about making profit (the basic meaning of “market forces”) based on the law of demand and supply that consistently show little regard for how an individual’s choices and actions affect the life of others, then perhaps the situation calls for a *global referendum on capitalism* itself. Conversely, if a society that boasts of being irrevocably “communalistic” consistently shows a *nuanced individualism* at the core of its operating principle, then it signals the time for a radical deconstruction of its primary ethics. This chapter underscores the error in both situations.

We argue here that there is an urgent need to *rediscover* or *retrieve* the intrinsic bonds that hold society together. Our analysis shows that while the notion of “social contract” (evident in first world societies) or “social relationships” (exemplified in traditional or tribal

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<sup>502</sup> It is mind-numbing listening to the argument in American media about the rationality of tax-cuts to the millionaires and billionaires (“because they create jobs”) when the country is struggling under an overwhelming debt burden.

communities) seem to suggest this bond, it is rather the *moral voice* of the community that preserves it. In fact it is the moral voice of the community that upholds the values inherent in the notion of social contract and all social relationships. It is the moral voice of the community that forms and preserves *conscience* such that when the moral voice is lost, the very fabric of moral formation is moribund. The complementary nature of the relationship between the moral voice of the community and the individual conscience is not only highlighted but even more pertinent is exposing how it serves as the custodian of both socio-moral responsibility and society itself.

This chapter also argues that the consequences of the loss of the moral voice of a given moral community is not just deformation (or loss) of conscience along with its symptoms (or “pathologies”) that include a corrosive form of “tribalism” that has emerged in both developed and developing world, but even more significant perhaps is its global ramification that include but not limited to terrorism and recent forms of cross-border crimes or international scams. We shall explore the socio-moral conditions that enable the loss of moral voice and how globalization has *glocalized* these conditions and its consequences.



### 3.1 The Notion of Community

The notion of community is described by **W. B. Gallie** as an “essentially contested concept” due to the endless debate it generates.<sup>503</sup> But does this imply that no evident consensus exists as to its meaning? We do not think so. **Philip Selznick** points out the need to adhere to the rule that allows “definitions in social theory should be weak, inclusive, and relatively uncontroversial.”<sup>504</sup>

He argues at the same time that what is more critical pertains to issues arising from the formulations of theories rather than definitions. He suggests a loose definition of community by

**Robert M. Clever** and **Charles H. Page**:

Wherever the members of any group, small or large, live together in such a way that they share, not this or that particular interest, but the basic conditions of common life, we call that group a community. The mark of a community is that one’s life may be lived wholly within it. One cannot live wholly within a business organization or a church; one can live wholly within a tribe or city. The basic criterion of community, then, is that all of one’s social relationships may be found within it.<sup>505</sup>

Though Selznick identifies from the above “comprehensiveness” as a “threshold criterion” for defining the notion of community, but he considers this too demanding or exclusive. He refines that definition by arguing that “a group is community to the extent that it encompasses a broad range of activities and interests, and to the extent that participation implicates whole persons

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<sup>503</sup> See W. B. Gallie, “Essentially Contested Concepts” in *Proceedings of Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 56, 1955-6, 1967-98 cited by Andrew Mason, in *Community, Solidarity and Belonging: Levels of Community and their Normative Significance* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 18. A. Mason cites Raymond Plant, Harry Lesser, Peter Taylor-Gooby, and Michael Taylor as holding similar views while Brian Barry would critique this view as an open door towards relativism. “Obscurities of Power,” in *Government and Opposition*, vol. 10, 1975, pp. 250-4 in A. Mason, *Community, Solidarity and Belonging, Ibid.* p. 18. Philip Selznick acknowledges the lack of consensus as to its definition. See P. Selznick, *Moral Commonwealth, Loc. Cit.* p. 357

<sup>504</sup> Philip Selznick, *Moral Commonwealth*, p. 357

<sup>505</sup> Robert M. Macleaver and Charles H. Page, *Society: An Introductory Analysis* (New York: Rinehart, 1949), p.8f cited by Selznick, *Moral Commonwealth*, p. 358

rather than segmental interests or activities.”<sup>506</sup> This allows “community” to be seen as a “variable aspect of group experience”<sup>507</sup> such that groups can experience varying degrees of community life. What is critical for him is a mutuality of “shared beliefs and commitments”<sup>508</sup> but does not necessarily include “all” of one’s social relationships that suggest location.

Obviously many sociologists would consider location or territoriality as essential to the notion of community. For instance, **Robert H. Winthrop** defines community as “a geographically localized population distinguished by extensive social interaction, relative self-sufficiency, and a common CULTURE or identity.”<sup>509</sup> Selznick admits the importance of “locality” but does not think it constitutes an essential part of the definition. He argues that while locality or “common residence” is “congenial” as a practical matter for forming or sustaining community, but incorporating it into the definition excludes other forms of forming communities (like shared beliefs or activity) that do not involve location. The “internet communities” or internet-based-network of relationships and activities is a current phenomenon that wholly supports Selznick’s line of argument even though he was making a case for certain forms of institutions to be considered as communities or “quasi-communities.”<sup>510</sup>

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<sup>506</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>509</sup> Robert H. Winthrop, *Dictionary of Common Concept in Cultural Anthropology* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), p. 40

<sup>510</sup> Selznick, *Moral Commonwealth*, p. 359. He would however distinguish “community” from “pure organization.” The latter is formed with the aim of mobilizing and directing human energies towards a specific goal, the former has only a generic but no specific purpose. This allows him to argue for “special-purpose institutions” or organizations like the police force, the army, or religious organs to form “communities” because “purpose” is not too rigidly defined while allowing “participation” to be essential.

Andrew Mason provides a perspective by distinguishing what he calls the ordinary sense of community from “mere society or association.” Adopting the classical distinctions of Ferdinand Tönnies, he argues that “mere association” is when a group of people interact “primarily on a contractual basis” with the aim of satisfying personal or group interests; but a community also involves a group of people but they share common values, a way of life, and an identity.<sup>511</sup> He further defines a “group of people” as “a collection of individuals who either act together or cooperate with one another in pursuit of their own goals or who at least possess some common interests.”<sup>512</sup> For him, a common sense view of community would admit it as a “sub-set” of “groups” such that “all communities are groups but not all groups are communities.”<sup>513</sup>

Mason considers some communities as “collectives,” which he describes as “subjects of goals, decisions, and actions.”<sup>514</sup> He defines culture as “a way of life which is informed by a set of interconnected traditions of thought and inquiry.”<sup>515</sup> In his view, *a way of life* means “a set of rule-governed practices,” loosely held together at least to form a discernible body of socio-political, and economic activity.<sup>516</sup> Members of a community by sharing a “way of life” would

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<sup>511</sup> Andrew Mason, *Community, Solidarity, and Belonging: Levels of Community and their Normative Significance* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 21. Ferdinand Tönnies distinctions between *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft* in *Community and Society*, translated by Charles P. Loomis (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002)

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>513</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.* p. 22

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid* This is only one way of defining a culture. There are several views.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid*

invariably share a distinct “culture.” Both terms then can be “nested” thereby allowing individual members to share different “ways of life” and “cultures.”

He affirms that “personal commitment” or cooperation is at the heart of community since the “way-of-life” exists only if members abide by the rules of engagement. The degree of commitment is open to scrutiny by members as a criterion for mutual acceptance.<sup>517</sup> He adds “solidarity” and “no systematic exploitation” as extra qualities of a “moralized” notion of community, thus distinguishing it from the ordinary notion above. He means by “solidarity” not merely identifying with the group but that members must at a minimum give serious consideration to the interest of others (give it “non-instrumental weight in their practical reasoning”).<sup>518</sup> Following John Baker he argues that there is no genuine “sense” of community if there is the “degrader and degraded; the exploiter and exploited”<sup>519</sup> for these terms contradict the very notion of community.

Mason’s distinctions provide helpful insights to the complexity of defining community. It is reasonable to concede that sharing a common culture or way of life should be form part of its defining characteristic. However, we would insist with Selznick that one need not live one’s whole life in it so long as there is evident “commitment” to its values and interests. We shall

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<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-27

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid* The difficulty will be establishing how mutual concern is interpreted and enforced. The John Rawl’s principle of difference insists on the citizens being ‘unwilling to be better-off unless it improves the condition of the worst-off’ has many critics. Thomas Nagel, according to Mason, holds a view that admits mutual concern even when the “best-off accepts benefits that worsens the condition of the worst-off, provided the benefits are sufficiently large.” See T. Nagel, *Equality and Partiality*, p. 73 cited by Mason, *Ibid.* p. 29. Consider perhaps President George Bush’s “tax-cuts” benefits to the Billionaires in this light and you may understand its “rationality”. How could general reluctance to be better off than others be “socialized” in a *healthy measure* for the good of the community?

examine later the implication of exploitation to the malformation of a community, but let us first delineate distinguishing characteristics of a community.

### 3.2 The Nature of Community

Apart from the insights from the foregoing, Philip Selznick's notion of community we started with above is attractive not merely based on its inclusivity but more importantly because he argues for a *normative theory* of community that is at once affirmative and critical. It identifies the salient elements of a good community and provides insight as to how to critically assess what constitutes a departure from the goals of a standard community. In line with this objective he identifies seven integral elements of a viable community: "historicity, identity, mutuality, plurality, autonomy, participation, and integration."<sup>520</sup>

*Historicity* implies shared history and culture. It is characterized by custom (or way of life), language, institutional life, and shared major life events. It might include territorial elements: location, size, and demography. The moral element in a sense of history is inherent in the insight experience provides in the determination of means and ends, as well as the practical value of commitment. *Identity* is the result of socialization. It is natural for humans to identify with people, place, or thing that share some commonality with them: kinship ties, beliefs, ideology, among others. Selznick holds that it is very problematic evaluating the "moral worth" of a formed identity. He therefore distinguishes a "community" from a "sense of community." He has this to say:

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<sup>520</sup> Philip Selznick, *Moral Commonwealth*, p. 361

Fixed identities – local, religious, ethnic – are likely to generate demands for self-affirmation that all too often lead to insularity and withdrawal. This parochialism is a chief source of virulent antagonisms. Hence *the formation of identities can be destructive of community*. The gains of security and self-esteem must be balanced against the loss of more comprehensive, more inclusive, more integrative attitudes.<sup>521</sup>

We know now from current experience (of religion-based forms of terrorism) how destructive of community certain forms of “identity” with a given community could be. We shall see later how “fixed identities” (certain forms of tribalism) could constitute a form of social pathology.

*Mutuality* refers to the need for cooperation and interdependence at all levels of life in a functional community. A community cannot exist without an active mutuality or reciprocity.

However, Selznick suggests mutuality needs to “implicate persons and groups as *unities*” rather than multiplicities.<sup>522</sup> Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II) would consider this “*unity*” in multiplicity (of subjects) as constitutive of community.<sup>523</sup> Wojtyla however considers this unity as “accidental” both to each subject and to their sum because he views “personal subjects” as “substantial subjects (*supposita*)” while community is constituted by a set of interpersonal and social relations and therefore only an *accidental* being.<sup>524</sup> Selznick insists that merely applying the principles of contract cannot sustain a community because the level of mutual cooperation needed is not pre-determined but could call for a more “diffuse and open-ended duties” that

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<sup>521</sup> Selznick, *Moral Commonwealth*, p. 362. The emphases are ours.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.* p. 362

<sup>523</sup> Karol Wojtyla, *Person and Community, Loc. Cit.*, p. 238

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid* He is obviously arguing from a metaphysical perspective.

sometimes require “unequal contributions rather than a carefully balanced reciprocity.”<sup>525</sup> He sees a progressive transition from association to community; from reciprocity to solidarity, and on to fellowship – when mutuality transcends mere contractual relationships (exchange), often ephemeral to create deeper bonds of caring, commitment, and interdependence.<sup>526</sup>

He presents *plurality* as underscoring the value of “intermediate associations” in the vitality of the community. Through such associations, or sub-groups, the bond between individual members with the larger community is extended and maintained. Without such associations, each individual is isolated from the life of the community precisely because the “community” as such is more of an abstract and/or “impersonal” entity. He holds that the “group structure” helps in the balance of power in a centralized system.<sup>527</sup> Put succinctly:

Thus understood, plurality is a normative idea. It does not refer to every dispersal of power and commitment, every proliferation of interests, groups, and authorities. A healthy differentiation of institutions and of personal, family, ethnic, locality, and occupational groups depends on the capacity of each to preserve its own well-being within a framework of legitimacy, and without fracturing or fragmenting the social order.<sup>528</sup>

It is important to note this view of “plurality” as an important feature characterizing the notion of community. The reason will become obvious when we examine “pathologies” of community. Selznick considers plurality as a form of “healthy differentiation” if and only if it could maintain

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<sup>525</sup> Selznick, *Moral Commonwealth*, p. 362

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>527</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>528</sup> Philip Selznick, *Moral Commonwealth*, p. 363

its legitimacy without undermining (“fracturing or fragmenting”) the social order. We shall revisit what this implies in a community where groups have sharply opposed interests.

*Autonomy* is a character of a community for obvious reasons: it is critical to selfhood and personal identity. Therefore, individuals make a free choice to be part of the community even though this may not be understood in absolute terms.<sup>529</sup> Selznick points to the need “to protect freedom *in* associations as well as freedom *of* association”<sup>530</sup> to underscore the fact that individuals need protection of liberty in relation to the domineering influence of an external authority but also in relation to the influence of the in-group which sometimes prove to be more oppressive and exploitative of the individual. Autonomy does not however imply “unconditional opportunity and choice” but is predicated on the assumption that “the worth of a community is measured by the contribution it makes to the flourishing of unique and responsible persons.”<sup>531</sup> Hence, *autonomy* properly understood includes inculcating a deep sense of commitment towards the common interest of the community.

*Participation* evokes the idea of “sharing” or “solidarity” we saw in Mason’s description above. There are different forms of social participation. Selznick identifies the most basic as “procreation, child-rearing, work, kinship, friendship.”<sup>532</sup> Other forms of participation are extensions of these basic frameworks. It is a word that has deep implications in all forms of

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<sup>529</sup> We neither choose our parents, nor our family, ethnicity, or primary community as such. However, we form free associations, and people do migrate to other countries and become citizens in a country other than their country/community of birth.

<sup>530</sup> Selznick, p. 363

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid*



relationships by determining its depths. Participation is essential to the vitality and dynamism of the community. The more involved the members of the community are in collective activity the more a sense of community flourishes and vice versa. Selznick however considers “mass mobilization of detached individuals” as less than the ideal communal participation. Participation does not imply individuals give up their own individual pursuits but that they commit to furthering the goals of the community as needed. This means that sometimes the “needs” of the community demand that individuals sacrifice their own interests for the greater good of the community. The deeper individuals and groups are willing to “participate” in the community to that extend will they be integrated into its life and be part of its vitality and dynamism.

For example, many young wives do sacrifice a lucrative career in order to “participate” in the role of procreation and childrearing not just vital to aims of marriage (raising a family) but critical to populating and developing the community. Without this sacrifice, the community will inevitably self-destruct, making it impossible for individual dreams to survive. Therefore, individual ambitions cannot thrive at the detriment of the communal goals. Another example might help: In American politics, subsidy or tax-cut for the top 1% has become an electioneering hot-button issue. It is baffling how this state of affairs came into being. The simple logic is that if American billionaires do not consider it “reasonable” to make some sacrifices as part of a concerted effort to bail out the country (the goose that laid the golden egg) at a time of serious economic distress, it not only shows a disturbing *lack of commitment* to the greater goals of the community but also reveals a puzzling irrationality since they may likely lose more money in the event of a collapsed economy. This is a classic case of how self-interest, if not outright greed, could blind us or desensitize us to reality.

*Integration* explains the development of “institutions, norms, beliefs, and practices”<sup>533</sup> that build and maintain a healthy community. He argues that the “quality” of community is determined by the “character” of its institutions.<sup>534</sup> Therefore, integration tries to hold all the qualities above in tension – in the light of prevailing circumstances. He concludes:

A fully realized community will have a rich and balanced mixture of all these seven elements. We cannot ignore the givenness of received custom and decisive events, but the appeal to historicity must respect the other values, so far as they are affected. Similarly, the claims of plurality and autonomy must be balanced against those of mutuality and participation. In this normative theory, the moral quality of community is measured by its ability to defend all the chief values at stake, to hold them in tension as necessary, and to encourage their refinement and elaboration.<sup>535</sup>

While it is possible to argue that the seven elements delineated by Selznick above does not exhaust the requirements for a viable community, we however affirm that they provide the sufficient and necessary conditions for a viable community. The uniqueness of a given community is constituted by the interplay of these elements just as they determine its strengths or deficiencies. For instance, a community where mutuality and reciprocity is properly balanced will be reflected in strong commitment of its individual members and sub-groups to the general wellbeing of the community. Conversely, where such mutuality and reciprocity is skewed or deficient will give rise to a community where plurality implies *division* (multiplicity) instead of *unity*. The degree of this division will determine the degree of fragmentation within the community itself to the point where an authentic community may no longer be viable.

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<sup>533</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.* p. 364

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid*

### 3.3 THE LOSS OF A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Social scientists and ethicists have noted the dangers of losing our sense of community. Amitai Etzioni, a social scientist, in *The Spirit of Community*, lamented the loss of “traditional communities” as the harbinger of the loss of a sense of community. Invoking Ferdinand Toonies’ *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft* distinction, he argues forcefully that the preference “moderns” placed on the *gesellschaft* is rather misleading. *Gemeinschaft* is the notion of community arising out of kinship and loyalty bond that is as deep as it is exclusive. *Gesellschaft* on the other hand arises out of contractual relations (“*du ut des* I give so that you will give”)<sup>536</sup> that is as superficial as it is inclusive.

The former is considered “primitive,” “backward,” “restrictive,” and appropriate for tribal villages, towns and uncivilized communities; the latter is “modern,” “rational,” “autonomous” and suited for cities, metropolis, and developed societies.<sup>537</sup> While the former promotes “we-ness” or solidarity and/or collectivism, the latter supports “me-sm” or what popular culture calls *individualism* and assures an “unfettered pursuit of self-interest”<sup>538</sup> that is the bedrock of private enterprise in a free market economy. He shows how even those who promote this latter mindset admit it comes at a high price: an “unfettered market” does not only

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<sup>536</sup> Ferdinand Toonies, *Community and Society*, trans by Charles P. Loomis (New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 2002), p. 252

<sup>537</sup> Amitai Etzioni, *The Spirit of the Community: The Reinvention of the American Society* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), pp. 116-117. See a different perspective that leads to same conclusion by Stanley Huerwas in *The Huerwas Reader*, J. Berkman and M. Cartwright eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 178-199

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.* Etzioni earlier argues that “When the term community is used, the first notion that typically comes to mind is a place in which people know and care for one another – the kind of place in which people do not merely ask “How are you?” as a formality but care about the answer. This we-ness (which cynics have belittled as a “warm, fuzzy” sense of community) is indeed part of its essence.” p. 31 We simply define “collectivism” here as the intellectual persuasion that stresses inter-subjectivity or human interdependence that allows individual ambitions to be subjected to communal interests (though not necessarily consumed by it).

imply loose social relations but loose morals as well. This became the fertile ground upon which “Wall Street” emerged in the 1980s.

The notion of “street” underscores the inherent freedom and lack of moral inhibitions that sharply contrasts the restrictions imposed by moral discipline commonly associated with a sense of “community.” It is not then surprising that “The street” became, ‘a den of thieves’ thick with knaves who held that anything went so long as you made millions more than the next guy”?<sup>539</sup> Though the pursuit of self-interest without hindrance was promoted by American governments as a “social force that revitalizes economies and societies,” it was not long before even its strongest advocates recognize that it is an ideology that spirals greed out of control.<sup>540</sup> It was this ideology that is at the root of the prime mortgage crisis that resulted in the global recession from which the world economy is still struggling to overcome.

In addition to the above ideological monster, the contractual model of social relationships (*gesellschaft*) in its modern evolution has other equally troublesome siblings: statistics show a fast-paced fragmentation of modern families:<sup>541</sup> a high percentage of divorce with an alarming increase in single parenthood, and an equally troubling decrease in birthrate especially in developed economies. This development has been linked to the same ideological persuasion that stresses “individualism” in form of “careerism” that considers individual success as the only path to self-fulfillment such that collective goals of a nuclear family, and ultimately that of the larger

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<sup>539</sup> *Ibid*, p. 118

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid*. p. 119

<sup>541</sup> See R. Philips, *Putting Asunder: A History of Divorce in Western Societies* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1988); F. McAllister and L. Clarke, *Choosing Childlessness* (London: Family Policy Center, 1998); Mitch Pearlstein, *From Family Collapse and American Decline: The Educational, Economic, and Social Costs of Family fragmentation* (Lanham, Maryland: R&L Education, 2011), pp. 29-90

community (nation) is sacrificed at the altar of personal ambition. Despite all possible benefits of careerism, it is a fact that it has also created an unhealthy competition in the family resulting in a work frenzy that give rise to neglected and abused children, increase in rate of divorce and its consequences chief of which is the subsequent fragmentation of the nuclear family, more alienation, more dysfunctional homes, more abused children that are more likely to grow up to be deviant.<sup>542</sup> Add to this scenario old parents that are abandoned by their children, neighbors that never care to know each other even though they have shared apartments for years, children and young adults that are fast losing the capacity for inter-personal relations (modern technology has consolidated this), and an increasing indifference or a growing insensitivity to the pain we cause others even as we ironically become hypersensitive to all pain. These are part of the baggage we can trace to this same model.

The question that is begging for an answer is whether the global community and/or individual nation states can read the signs of our time (like the reason behind the recent recession) as a wake-up call that allows them to critically re-evaluate the socio-philosophical foundations upon which modern social and economic relations are built or maintain an almost irrational following of ideologies that have the potential to drive it to the precipice. The answer

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<sup>542</sup> Amiti Etzioni outlines the statistics on modern American family, the divorce problem and its effects on Children in *The Spirit of Community, Op. Cit.* p. 72-77. We cite here the quote he culled from Judith Wallerstein in *Second Chances: Men, Women, Children a Decade After Divorce*: “In our study, one out of three of the young men and one in ten of the young women between ages nineteen and twenty-three at the ten-year mark are delinquent, meaning they act out their anger in a range of illegal activities including assault, burglary, arson, drug dealing theft, drunk driving, and prostitution. Many of these children got involved in one episode of breaking the law before age eighteen, but a disturbing number of them continue this delinquency pattern into their early twenties... The kind of misbehavior that we see – abuse of drugs and alcohol, petty vandalism, and the like – is widespread in our society, divorce or no divorce. Although such misbehavior emerges in children of divorce, the more frequent pattern in their lives is one of underachievement, low self-esteem, and inhibition of anger related feelings of rejection.” Cited by A. Etzioni, in *The Spirit of the Community*, p. 75-6; We add that there is evidence that African couples who migrated abroad for greener pastures are experiencing higher percentage of divorce than those back home in Africa.

to this question will invariably lead to a need to retrieve the deeper social bonds that hold society together – at the root of which is a recovery of a *sense* of community. It is our assessment that this “sense” is dangerously eroding, if not virtually lost, not only in many nations of the developed world, but ironically, in many of the developing world as well, and particularly in Africa where it is *uncritically* assumed that community thrives. Given this paradox, we now consider the idea of community in Africa keeping in mind the qualities listed above for a viable community if the reader considers these as objective criteria for evaluating any community. Our view does take cognizance of the complexity of the notion of community as noted below:

The community does not constitute a primitive and simple social relation. It is complex, since it associates in a very fragile way heterogeneous feelings and attitudes; it is learnt, as it is only through a socialization process, which, strictly, is never completed, that we learn to take part in interdependent communities. It is never pure, since communal links are associated with situations of calculation, conflict, or even violence. That is why it seems preferable to refer to ‘communalization’ (*Vergemeinschaftung*) rather than community, and to find out how some ‘diffuse solidarities’ are constituted and maintained.<sup>543</sup>

Boudon and Bourricaud highlight the inherent complexity in the notion community that we do not intend to ignore. Our preceding chapters on moral responsibility have underscored selfishness as a native human tendency that goes against the grain of what community is about. The rivalries and conflicts in families and communities are often issues around competing “interests.” A healthy community is one that has succeeded in balancing these competing interests to the degree that majority of its members realize it is in their remote or proximate interest to promote the community interests above their individual ones but never vice versa

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<sup>3</sup> Raymond Boudon and Francois Bourricaud, *A Critical Dictionary of Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1989), 74, <http://www.questia.com/read/103532610>

since the trajectory of self-transcendence moves ever upwards. The genius however is how to hold individual and communal interests in a healthy tension. We do recognize the value of “conflicts” in the dialectics of social evolution.<sup>544</sup> We affirm that conflicts in all human communities arises not only to the degree this tension is disproportionately maintained but as a necessary part of the *process* of developing all forms of social relations. This complexity associated with the notion of community is made even more apparent as we turn to consider the notion of community in African context.

### 3. 4. Community and African Communalism

We have examined African notion of community in relation to personhood and responsibility in Chapter One, and African notion of Conscience in Chapter two. We will now attempt a further development of the notion of community in relation to the concept of *Communalism*.

African *communalism*<sup>545</sup> is a philosophical concept or framework that encapsulates how the notion of community permeates every aspect of the African mind, culture, moral and civic education, and/or way of life. Polycarp Ikuenobe argues that “the idea of communalism in

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<sup>544</sup> Georg Simmel has shown how “contradiction and conflict” constitute critical elements of “unity” (either as peace in a community or personal harmony). He considers a “pure unification” (“*Vereinigung*”) as “empirically unreal”. See “Conflict as Sociation,” in *Sociological Theory: A Book of Readings, fifth edition*, L.A Coser and B. Rosenberg, eds. (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc. 1989), pp. 175-177 at 76. We acknowledge Karl Marx does leave us with the *dialectics of class conflicts* but that is not the direction of our argument here even though we admit some element of his notion of “dialectics” in our understanding of the value of conflicts in general. See other elaborations on the social value of conflict according to Lewis A. Coser in *The function of Social Conflict* (Glencoe, III. The free Press, 1956), pp. 151-156

<sup>545</sup> This distinguishes other uses of the term in history as noted by the definition offered by Random House Unabridged Dictionary that distinguishes two notions of the term: first as “a theory” or “system of government” where “independent communes participate in a federation.” Secondly, as “the principle and practice of communal ownership;” one may find an example of this in communist and/or socialist political philosophies. A third notion is attributed to RH Webster, as the “strong allegiance to one’s ethnic group rather than to society.” For the forgoing, see: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communalism>

African cultures may be understood in terms of the moral ideas of personhood, community, and their connection.”<sup>546</sup> He adds that it “provides the basis for understanding moral principles and values” in African traditions.<sup>547</sup> Our concern here is not so much the broader aspects of this concept but essentially to stress how it enables us to understand not just how community permeates all aspect of African life, but more importantly, how community is the context for moral thought, moral education, and moral responsibility. The idea of communalism in African perspective underscores the critical nature of community for the holistic moral formation of the African person. Community is *everything* for the African person. This was noted in the last chapter with the phrase: “*because we are, I am.*” It is the community that provides the individual with the notion of what is right and wrong, with a sense of personhood, and with requisite honors invests dignity to a successful “son of the soil” for making the community proud. Ikuenobe adds:

[I]n African cultures...it takes a whole community or village to raise a morally good child; the morally good child is the pride and proper representative of the community. The educational element of communalism in African cultures implies there is a concerted effort on the part of every person in the community to help others learn how to behave or act properly. This is done by constant prodding, ribbing, poking, and chiding by neighbors, friends, relatives, or elders. Everyone in the community wants to raise a child that they, as a community, can be proud of. In this sense, parenting is also a community responsibility. There is an organismic process of educating a person.<sup>548</sup>

Obviously the above is a sharp contrast to the Western model of child moral education. Though the community is *indirectly* involved in some way in the moral education of the child in the West but it pales in comparison to the *direct* involvement of the African model. There is a serious

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<sup>546</sup> Polycarp Ikuenobe, *Philosophical Perspectives on Communalism and Morality in African Traditions*, *Loc. Cit.* p. 93

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>548</sup> Ikuenobe, *Ibid.* p. 73



implication in this. Given the critical involvement of the community in how a child is formed, it implies that any deficiency in the moral ethos of the community impacts directly on the moral formation of the child and vice versa. In other words, seeking proper identification of the moral potencies or deficiencies of an African person does not so much have to look at the person *as such* but to the moral community of formation. This community model of moral assessment is actually in practice in some African cultures. Among the Igbos of Nigeria, it is customary to know what a child is capable of by simply inquiring after the family/parents. It is significant that traditional inquiries related to behavior are often centered on “families” and/or “groups” as opposed to individuals. This seems to be a big deal!<sup>549</sup> But what significance does it have for understanding *clusters* of human behavior in our times? It is difficult to say. Dozie-Okafor distinguishes African communalism from other communalistic systems in history:

African communalism is unlike the socialist or communist system of ‘to each according personal need, from each according to personal abilities’. It is still different from the principle of state monopoly of the factors of production. It is still further removed from the system of private monopoly of bourgeois aristocracy. Communalism entails basic common ownership and involvement in the factors of production. Participation is neither informed by radical individualism nor unmitigated collectivism...It involves a delicate conscious balance between self-centeredness and altruism.<sup>550</sup>

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<sup>549</sup> This research does not concern itself with details “as to content” of child-formation as such but to identify the “process” as per primary modes of formation. For the details of such formation, see Ferdinand C. Ezekwonna, *African Communitarian Ethic: The Basis for the Moral Conscience and Autonomy of the Individual*, *Loc. Cit.* pp. 103-166; Gregory I. Olikenyi, *African Hospitality: A Model for the communication of the Gospel in the African Cultural Context* (Enugu: Snaap Press, 2001), pp. 102-133; John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi: East African Education Publishers, 1995), pp. 100-146.

<sup>550</sup> C. Dozie-Okafor, *Towards Integral Nationhood* (Owerre: Lemmy Press, 1994), p. In many parts of Nigeria communal ownership of land is still in practice. An individual cannot sell even his own share of the family land without the consent of his kinsmen among the Igbos.

In the light of the concern we expressed in the last segment for the erosion or loss of a *sense* of community and the consequences of an “unfettered pursuit of self-interest,” some African scholars have identified “greed” (the direct antonym of “hospitality” in Africa) as the “universal evil.” It stands in direct opposition to what communalism and community stands for in Africa.

Laurenti Magesa puts it succinctly thus:

Greed constitutes the most grievous wrong. Indeed, if there is one word that describes the demands of the ethics of African religion, sociability in the sense of hospitality, open-hearted sharing, is that word. Hospitality negates greed. It means the readiness and availability to form community. It means that one remembers and honors God and the ancestors and is ready to share with them through sharing the gift and power of life with other members of the family, lineage, or clan. The purpose of hospitality is to enhance life in all its dimensions. Its foundation is in the very structure of existence itself.<sup>551</sup>

The *vital force* of the universe which sustains life in all its dimensions and in which every member of the African community is sharing (includes the living dead called *ancestors*),<sup>552</sup> demands sharing as a permanent constitutive element of existence that underscores the very idea of communalistic orientation of African thought and way of life. African communalism conceives all life as a unity and/or organismic. Everything shares in some form in the vital force that animates and preserves all things. Greed distorts the very order of existence itself by reserving to itself by a skewed sense of *right* what belongs to all as a *gift*. A greedy person therefore contravenes the first and most important moral code of communalism that obliges everyone to share all resources, material and immaterial gifts, with one’s family, relations, clan,

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<sup>551</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *African Religions, Loc. Cit.* p. 62. Some scholars would however consider “witchcraft” as “the evil” per excellence in the context of Africa. John Mbiti describes it broadly as the use of mystical power in all its manifestations to cause harm to others. See *African Religions and Philosophy, Op. Cit.*, p. 202

<sup>552</sup> For a deeper understanding of Ancestors See Benezet Bujo, *African Theology In Its Social context*, trans by John O’Donohue (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), pp. 23-32

and friends. It is the willingness to participate in this essential “sharing” that is constitutive of having a “sense” of community. In Africa, all formation is to imbibe this sense. To possess it implies one has acquired the African *spirit*. It is a spirit that *shares* because it *cares*. It is not an accident that *hospitality* is a cardinal virtue in Africa.

Kwasi Wiredu however holds that the difference between communalism and individualism as one of difference in life styles than morality as such; a difference of degree than of kind since those who practice communalism give “considerable value” to individualism and vice versa; and that both ideas can “co-exist” in the same society.<sup>553</sup> We disagree with the first position because we consider there is an intrinsic difference between them rather than merely external (life-style). It is the internal difference that gives rise to the difference in external expression of it (life-style). However, we admit that communalism and individualism could “co-exist” in the same system only as an index that measures the degree to which people have assimilated or accepted either viewpoint as mainstream philosophy of life. It also indicates there is no such thing as a thorough going communalistic or individualistic system yet in existence, for even absolutists regimes had pockets of individualistic practices. While no system is leak-proof, it is important to identify which direction the natural pull goes: towards individual or communal interests? Our analysis in chapter two indicates that a self-transcending tendency is indicative of personal growth and a community that has more people willing to sacrifice personal interest for the common interest is in a much healthier place than otherwise.

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<sup>553</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p.72

There is a caveat though about who constitutes a “member” of the African community, and what criterion determines the *rightness* or *wrongness* of an action. First level of analysis identifies “blood” relationship as the “primary determinant” of who belongs to the community or “tribe”. This is different from *being born* in the community. The second determinant of membership is ability to undergo community *initiation* successfully. Thirdly, we identify the capacity and/or willingness to abide by the norms of the community. Fourthly, strangers who do not qualify for membership by the first or second markers, may be accepted as “adopted members” when they distinguish themselves by their actions as extraordinarily loving and kind towards the community. This is rare,<sup>554</sup> but a refreshing possibility.

The criterion for membership is a salient area of reflection because it holds the code for bringing down walls of division among multiple ethnic groups in Africa. We admit that legislation is the key to this. A less rigid criterion for membership in African communities is a pre-requisite for deeper relationships across ethnic lines and as vital element for national integration. Nigeria has a history where people from one ethnic group are considered “outsiders” in a different ethnic group even when they were born and bred in that “other” ethnic community. They have no privileges or rights unless such were made possible by civil law. Even then, it is difficult to implement. This needs to change given how it impacts social “integration” and nation building by removing the frustration and animosity often linked to feelings of alienation. This is precisely the point Selznick makes above in reference to problems of “fixed identities” that is the source of antagonisms and insularity in communities. Our experience indicates that a hardline

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<sup>554</sup> See John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995), p. 104

view of membership becomes even more problematic when it spills over into religion. We have more than a fair share of its negative consequences.

It is interesting to note that ordinarily, *deviants* are never fully “accepted” neither as members of African communities nor of any other human community as such. But there is a unique exception. In Africa there are deviants or “troublesome” members of the community who become “acceptable” *if and only if* they would fight and win wars against the perceived “enemies” of the community. In this way, rogues can become absorbed in a community but never to the extent of becoming *title* holders or respected member of the community. It is not evident that this is a native habit of all human communities but it may be worth investigating. This scenario has changed dramatically as a result of religious affiliation and/or political dispensation of benefits. In the latter, the “external enemy” is interpreted through the lens of “in-group” and “out-group” matrix such that each ethnic group feels bound to support its representative in government at all costs since he/she brings or expected to bring their own “share” of the national cake either by fair or foul means. This obviously impacts the quality of institutions built from such a premise, as we have noted earlier.

Interestingly, since it is the privilege of the community to determine what is right or wrong in Africa, the above scenario has an even deeper implication beyond justifying skewed political benefits. From a very broad communalistic moral perspective, *what is right is whatever promotes the life and development of the community*; and *whatever destroys or diminishes the life and development of the community is wrong*. It is this primary criterion functioning as a form of *primary principle* that informs how moral codes (secondary principles) are formulated from community to community. While the above primary principle remains unchanging, secondary

principles can change or reformulated to meet new demands that fulfill the basic demands of the primary criterion. V. Mulago argues that life preservation in the community is the indispensable criteria for anything moral:

Every effort must be directed to the preservation, maintenance, growth, and perpetuation of this common treasure [life of the community]. The pitiless elimination of everything which hinders this end, and the encouragement at all costs of everything which furthers it; this is the last word in [African] Bantu customs and institutions, wisdom and philosophy.<sup>555</sup>

Kwasi Wiredu's position in *Cultural Universals and Particulars* reflects the same mindset: he claims that "man or woman is the measure of all value (*Onipa na ohia*);" and moral values aim at "harmonization of all interests as the means, and the securing of human well-being as the end of all moral endeavor."<sup>556</sup> He laments the influence of urbanization and/or industrialization on city dwellers, who lacking the benefits of systems of sanctions and moral responsibility that traditional communities provide, become prone to crime and irresponsibility.<sup>557</sup>

There is an obvious attraction for supporting the above perspective: if people get thoroughly formed by it, it could possibly yield an egalitarian society. But it has inherently deep and dangerous set-backs: Primarily, it is prone to *serious abuse*. It provides justification for "self-interest" to easily transmute to "group-interest" merely on the basis of "group" or "kinship" rather than its *ethic*. This is a clear example of what we classify as the *extended ego phenomenon* where self-interest merely masks itself *in* the very notion of "group" but without changing its

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<sup>555</sup> V. Mulago, "Vital Participation," in Dickson and Ellingworth, *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*, cited by Magesa, *African Religions*, *ibid.* p. 63.

<sup>556</sup> Kwasi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 65

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid.* pp.71-2

inner content or nature. So instead of being transformed in this encounter with “others” (as selflessness does) it transforms others into itself. In other words, “self-interest” does not cease to be self-interest merely by referring to a given group. It needs some objective criteria of assessment.

In a healthy community, “self-interests” (interests of its individual members) is the conceptual platform for self-communal- transformation. The “self” sacrifices its interest for the “greater good” of others. The result is a dual transformation (for the self and others in community): this *self-transcending action* begets a *self-transcending reaction* analogous to a nuclear fission reaction that is diffused throughout the community affecting all layers of its life – and particularly strengthening the subterranean fabrics of its moral life. This is the dialectics that forges the spirit of the community/nation. It always looks beyond itself, and it should also look beyond the short-term gains to the individual community or tribe to the long-term gain that impacts the larger communities of humanity. The notion of an “extended ego” above, given its parochial vision, does the very opposite. This is why it is very dangerous to be uncritically allowed to guide the moral anchor for formulating communal, national or international policies. Whenever the “interest of the community” (tribe or nation) is uncritically interpreted, it easily could slide into serious moral abuses.

In the light of the above, it is then easy to see how “looting” of national treasury by an ethnic representative could become “justifiable” to members of his community based on the hope that it will *benefit* their community (a disguised self-interest). This skewed thinking has birthed a monstrously corrupt system in Nigeria and around Africa. It is however not peculiar to Africa. It is a similar mentality that is behind the pork barrel politics that often result in “a road to

nowhere” (a common saying in the United States that has historical basis in a road in Alaska). It is behind the lobbying frenzy that is transforming politics and distorting regulations that is changing business culture and our lifestyle.

This emergent power of “grouped interest” is what we call the *modern tribe*. It has a positive dimension but a more potently destructive power for community like no other because it represents the unleashing of the “extended ego” phenomenon on a grand scale. It is behind many foreign policy formulations like ones that *loudly* condemn African leaders for their lootings but *silently* accept it from them for “safe-keeping”. It is the same mentality that forms and sustains the “looting club” in many government enclaves particularly in Africa as a distinct “tribe” of those that share similar interests. The unity and strength of a nation is revealed in the capacity of its units (groups) to know *when* and *how* to effectively sacrifice their “group-interest” for the common interest of the nation. Americans are aware how lobbying or “pork” is destroying the beauty of its democracy. Africans are also aware how their leaders have looted the nation, given crumbs to their communities and grown too fat on the resources that should have benefited all. Anytime we allow self-interest to go unchecked, we fall into its trap – and runaway greed results to the detriment of all.

Communalism in Africa not only shields the community from the ills of runaway greed but also ensures that the spirit of the community is preserved at all times. Individual achievement is considered a futile effort unless it has a tangible effect on the community. We saw in the first chapter how personhood is a quality that is acquired through the community’s system of recognition and approval. It is the same mechanism of approval that establishes one as a “successful son/daughter of X community” based on the condition that there is *visible evidence*



that one's prosperity has translated to community prosperity. In such a situation, it is not the individual achievement that is at issue, but rather the degree to which such achievement improves the lot of members of the community. The imperative here is the constant reference to, and the need to help, the community. This is an internalized (or socialized) mandate.

Every African has a deep inner orientation towards the primary community at the center of which is his/her family. This orientation is not unique to Africans, but how it impacts their whole life orientation has an African twist to it. The deeper question though is whether African communalism, as a philosophical persuasion, able to override native self-interest and instill altruistic attitudes beyond kin and reciprocation – beyond ethnic boundaries? The logic is that if it does not, or could not, then there is need to deconstruct this to fit African needs today. Common sense suggests that Africa needs a winning philosophical strategy if it must overcome the competition of this and succeeding centuries. Communalism in its present formulation is a primal philosophical orientation to life developed as a survival strategy in traditional societies that has a lot to teach the rest of the world about the ends of community. However, different ethnic communities need to first maximize the inherent values of communalism by a self-transcending effort towards more inclusivity as opposed to isolation. Africans need to show the rest of the world that they can co-exist with one another peacefully working out new strategies of cooperation in a world that is becoming more and more globalized and for that reason more complex. The different ethnic communities need to show they are capable of evolving a true commonwealth where resources are equitably shared in common union as a proof of the authenticity of their claim to communalism. This is an imperative that contemporary statehood demands. We all know the implications of not meeting this challenge.

### 3.5 RECIPROCITY BETWEEN CONSCIENCE AND THE MORAL COMMUNITY

In chapter one, part of our analyses of moral responsibility reveal four defining elements: a response to action upon us, interpretation, accountability, and social solidarity. We noted the significance of seeing human beings primarily as “responders” – we respond to actions done to us based on our interpretations of the meaning of actions done to us. We noted that this has serious implications for all forms of relationships (local, national, and global). Moral responsibility is developed from childhood based upon the interpretation individuals attach to actions done to them: the love and care of the mother or care-giver to the benevolence experienced in the larger community, the child develops trust and reciprocates love and care over time. Conversely, as indicated above, research on abused children has shown the negative impact of interpretations of “what was done to us” in the development of the child. The child often develops mistrust and is more prone to have difficulties with issues of love later in life.

There is strong evidence across cultures that a community where everyone is looking out for everyone else shows *closer bonding* and an *active sense* of community. Children brought up in such a context will no doubt show a sharper instinct for *empathy* or *sympathy* which, as we saw in chapter one, is the root of the *moral sense* that we associate with conscience and consequently to moral and social responsibility.<sup>558</sup> In other words, children brought up in a context where everyone is made to take care of everyone else – a social context with an active sense of community – will more likely develop an active conscience than someone formed in a contrary social context - where every other member of the community is held with active

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<sup>558</sup> We have noted the link between moral sense and conscience in the writings of representative thinkers like David Hume, John Newman, J. S Mill, among others.

suspicion or mistrust. It is like language; you develop the capacity to speak the language you are exposed to during your childhood. The former is still obtainable in rural communities around the world, and the latter in cities and metropolis. We admit a possible mix of both realities in some metropolis where “closed housing estates” try to evolve an active sense of community different from what is obtainable outside its gates. It does show however that they admit something of value has been lost in the larger community outside.

What is lost is the “moral voice” of the community. The moral voice is possible only in social units with an active sense of community. Amitai Etzioni provides us a sense of what the moral voice is about in relation to the community:

When the term community is used, the first notion that typically comes to mind is a place in which people know and care for one another – the kind of place in which people do not merely ask “How are you?” as a formality but care about the answer. This we-ness (which cynics have belittled as a “warm, fuzzy” sense of community) is indeed part of its essence. Our focus here, though, is on another element of community, crucial for the issues at hand: *communities speak to us in moral voices. They lay claims on their members.* Indeed, they are the most important sustaining source of moral voices other than the inner self.<sup>559</sup>

Developing a moral character is like learning a language. It starts with exposure to the right environment: a community with active moral voices. Then the child (individual) listens to the moral voices and his/her native capacity or potentiality become actualized to the degree it is *exposed* and *exercised*. And like language, its quality depends on its source. Etzioni affirms that the “community lays claims on its members.” It implies that members of the community play a critical role of holding its members “accountable” to some basic principles of right and wrong. It challenges them to uphold such values or else risk some form of disciplinary measures. It is expected that members comply because they would not want to risk public embarrassment. All

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<sup>559</sup> Amitai Etzioni, *The Spirit of the Community*, p. 31. The stress is his.

members of the community are “executors” of the moral discipline of the community. Etzioni illustrates this role of the community in his experience at a campus community where there was much compliance to the traffic every morning because each person knows the other person’s car. If you get out of line, expect the ribbing and chiding from the community at lunch that day! In another instance, he forgot to mow his lawn and a neighbor politely asked if he “needed the services of a good gardener” and another reminded him that such neglect will destroy the beauty of the neighborhood and result in poor valuation of property.<sup>560</sup> In these instances, the community acts as “external sanctions” that helps maintain moral discipline in that specific community. Its moral voice is active because each individual member tries to play their part by reminding each other of their moral and social responsibilities.

Etzioni argues that contemporary American society is experiencing the erosion of socio-moral values because the communities have lost their moral voices such that individual members are afraid of appearing “self-righteous” and/or “prudish”. Despite the dangers of “self-righteous” zealotry, he however prefers we err on the side of this self-righteousness than on the side of being “immobilized by fear” of displeasing others to the detriment of building a healthier society. He argues that the “*disinclination to lay moral claims undermines the daily, routine social underwriting of society.*”<sup>561</sup> The inability to maintain the moral voice of the community melts away the “social glue that helps hold the moral order together” and we are left with either a bloated legal sanctions system or moral anarchy.<sup>562</sup> He continues to argue that:

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<sup>560</sup> See Amitai Etzioni, *The Spirit of the Community*, p. 33

<sup>561</sup> Etzioni, *The Spirit of the Community*, p. 35. The stress is his.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.* p. 36

It is unrealistic to rely on individuals' inner voices and to expect that people will invariably do what is right completely on their own. Such a radical individualistic view disregards our social moorings and the important role that communities play in sustaining moral commitments.<sup>563</sup>

He is therefore convinced that we cannot build a "civil and decent society without a moral voice."<sup>564</sup> The alternative to this is either a "police state" or moral anarchy.

We have already noted earlier that we cannot legislate our way to morality. Failure to maintain the moral voices of the community implies that the natural social process of moral development will be impaired: the moral voice of the community is the non-coercive form of "external sanctions" that is vital in the progressive formation of conscience (internal sanction). Its absence is similar to the absence of parental figures (father and mother voices) to the growing child in the primary family unit. If the father and/or mother fails to provide moral nurturing as the child grows up, due to fear of offending the child's sensibilities, that child is endangered. Such neglect constitutes an "abuse" of nurturance that has serious consequences. Similarly, a community that has lost its moral voice due to fear of offending the sensibilities of its individual members "abuses" the humanity of its members; destroys the potentialities and the great possibilities that maintaining its moral voice would otherwise have called forth in its members with the attendant benefits accruable to the community.

The question is, if it is true that we are primarily "responders," to what extent does basic formation models in popular culture take account of this? We are living at a time when children/youths are becoming more and more vulnerable to poor moral formation due to a plurality of, but inter-connected, factors: 1. *family fragmentation* that provides no stability for an

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<sup>563</sup> *Ibid.* p. 36

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.* p. 37

enduring moral modeling. 2. *Schools emptied of moral ambience* such that teachers and school authorities no longer act as re-enforcers of morals and the school environment therefore provide little or no moral modeling or nurturing. 3. *Moral Indifference of secular society (a lack of any religious orientation)* completes the triad that provides the perfect atmosphere conducive for evolving a culture of social anomie. When most are denied the privilege of any form of *religious formation* they are deprived one source of moral formation that could have made some major difference. Given this scenario, is it possible that we *cannot imagine* the results that these present formation realities will force upon us in less than 50 years hence? It will definitely be a surprise if we do not necessarily have to evolve a *police state* or live in a sustained anomie or social anarchy not too long from now.<sup>565</sup>

More importantly for us, we need to ask if the African model sufficiently takes note of the implication of community *moral voices* in its basic formation process. The African communal model we tried to delineate so far indicates a community-based-formation process. The individual has no existence apart from the community. The community is still largely involved in the formation process in most African communities with some discernible exceptions in the cities centers across the continent. However, one significant problem is that the *content*, rather than the *form* is changing. We will address this in the section on pathologies of the moral community. Suffice it to say that African seems to have an enviable advantage for an enduring moral formation, the results does not seem to match the promises of the model. Why?

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<sup>565</sup> Evolving a police state is already a “progressive” or “proactive” reality in our time. We will be amazed if we are to be told the extent to which our privacy has become invaded in recent times by state intelligence apparatus. We are entering a decade of increased “smart proactive legislation” aimed at keeping “enemies at bay”. It is nothing short of “smart police state.” It is the direct expression of the tragedy of failed moral formation process.

### 3.6 CONSCIENCE AS ANAMNESIS OF THE COMMUNITY

From a theological perspective community is more precisely defined as a “communion” (*koinonia*) of minds and hearts in an effort to form (and act from) one spirit. It is therefore not just a union (a relationship) of *essences* but of *being* itself. Cardinal J. Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) called it the “fusion of existences” (but this in respect to the Church’s relation to Jesus).<sup>566</sup> He argues that “communion” is a situation where the “seemingly un-crossable frontier of my “I” is left wide open” such that one is “assimilated” into the “Other”. This “fusion of existences” gives form to a *single entity* (the Church).<sup>567</sup> He argues:

In this way communion makes the Church by breaching an opening in the walls of subjectivity and gathering us into the deep communion of existence. It is the event of “gathering” in which the Lord joins us to one another. The formula “the Church is the body of Christ” thus states that the Eucharist, in which the Lord gives us his body and makes us one body, forever remains the place where the Church is generated, where the Lord himself never ceases to found her anew; in the Eucharist, the Church is most compactly herself – in all places, yet only one, just as he is one only.<sup>568</sup>

We find in the above formulation not only an insight to understanding the Church’s relation to Jesus but of the essential element in all authentic relationships – the primary *openness* to the “other” such that *participating* in, and *assimilation* into the life of another is made possible. It is within such openness to the other that we discover our most authentic selves through openness to the truth – the ability to hear the voice of conscience deep within oneself as a memory

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<sup>566</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), p. 37

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.* The assimilation is into Jesus who made this openness possible by his total giving of himself.

<sup>568</sup> *Ibid.* p. 37

(*anamnesis*) of the *voice of the moral community* regarding the “good”. We shall elaborate on this shortly. It is perhaps helpful to retrieve at this point an important insight from Wojtyla.

Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II) made a distinction between the “I-thou” or the interpersonal dimension of relationship, and the “we” or social dimension of relationships to underscore the importance of “personal subjectivity” for a deeper understanding of the communal dimension. He admits that though the “I” is in a sense “constituted by the *thou*”,<sup>569</sup> but that this “thou” is always an “other” or another “I”. This implies a multiplicity that is at the center of the “unity” constituting community. The “thou” being another “I” expresses both a separation and a connection. However, the “thou” does contribute to my “self-affirmation” and helps to “ground me as an “I”. It is the *reciprocity* (as reflexivity) involved in I-thou relationship that characterizes it as “interpersonal” implying a “participation” in the being of another person.<sup>570</sup> This calls for “mutual” self-disclosure critical for shared vision and goals that in itself is reason for mutual self-transcendence and self-sacrificing acts of love. It is this interpersonal character that is critical in constituting the “I-thou” or what he calls “interpersonal community”. We already noted in chapter one his view that the self (as I or thou) is constituted by his/her acts, in the same way the “I-thou” relationship and/or community is similarly constituted by its acts. The deeper the bonds between the “I-thou” relationship, the more it develops “the character of trust, a giving of oneself,” and become more responsible and accountable to one another. He considers this “responsibility” as a “reflection of conscience” and the “transcendence” that

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<sup>569</sup> Wojtyla, *Person and Community*, *Loc. Cit*, p. 241

<sup>570</sup> *Ibid*, p.245



constitute the personal dimension of any authentic community. For him, “community” means “that which unites.”<sup>571</sup> When my “I” connects to many it transforms to a “we”. He argues:

I and thou refer only indirectly to the multiplicity of persons joined by the relation (one + one), whereas directly they refer to the persons themselves. *We*, on the other hand, refers directly to the multiplicity and indirectly to the persons belonging to this multiplicity. *We* primarily signifies a set – a set, of course, made up of people, of persons.<sup>572</sup>

Though Wojtyla distinguishes between the social dimension of community and the interpersonal, but he does so without sacrificing the “inter-subjective” nature of community relationships. He conceives the “we” as many “I’s” who by virtue of circumstance or choice have come to “exist and act together.” It is the relationship they share to a “common value” or the “common good” that bring them to *act together*. Though they remain individuals (an I and a thou) but the “direction” of their relationship and the “dimension” of that relationship has been reconstituted and by the *direction* determined by the common good.<sup>573</sup> It is the common good that conditions and determines the individual goods of each subject of the community. It does not destroy but verifies, affirms and enriches both the personal and interpersonal dimension of the community relationships. He holds that if a “diminution” or “distortion” occurs with respect to the “I”, the cause should be sought in some form of distortion in the “I’s” relation to, or interpretation of, the common good.<sup>574</sup> It is perhaps also the case in multiples of communities.

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<sup>571</sup> For the foregoing see Wojtyla, *Ibid.* pp. 245-6

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.* p. 246

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.* p. 247

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.* p. 248

Conscience, as the key element of the self-fulfillment of the personal self, points in a special way to transcendence and, so to speak, lies at its subjective center. Objectively, transcendence is realized in a relation to truth and to the good as “true” (as “benefitting,” *honestum*). The relation to the common good, a relation that unites the multiplicity of subjects into one *we*, should likewise be grounded in a relation to truth and to a “true” good. The proper dimension of the common good then comes to view. The common good is the essentially the good of many, and in its fullest dimension the good of all.<sup>575</sup>

The import of the above insights cannot be ignored in any serious analysis of the moral community. We see the evident similarity in the views of Ratzinger and his predecessor regarding community. The primary “openness” to the other makes it possible for shared vision and shared ideals – especially the ideals of the “true” and the “good”. This openness is then an aperture towards truth and goodness both in the individual and the community.

While views of what constitutes the “common good” may vary across culture but it is not in doubt that without openness and trust, a common notion of the common good cannot be formulated and affirmed by all within a given group or collectivity. Where such division exists, distortion persists, and therefore there can neither be an authentic community nor a relevant moral voice. The reason is simple: the moral voice is the expression of the moral unity of a given community. It encapsulates the community’s moral vision and points towards the *ideal community* it envisages. Our natural orientation towards the ideal of the *true* and the *good* is an internal proof there is in us an aperture towards transcendence. We have noted the integral connection between transcendence and conscience. According to Ratzinger, “what characterizes man as man is not that he asks about the ‘can’ but the ‘should’ and that he opens himself to the

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<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.* p. 249

voice and demands of truth.”<sup>576</sup> It is this capacity for truth that Ratzinger considers “a limit to all power and a guarantee of man’s likeness to God,” the proof of which we see in the martyrs who were “witnesses of conscience.”<sup>577</sup> It is about the “should” that this research is concerned.

Though Ratzinger observes the traditional distinction between two levels of conscience (see chapter two for *synderesis* and *conscientia*), he however prefers to replace *synderesis* with *anamnesis*. This platonic concept he considers not only “philosophically deeper and purer” but also in tune with the critical “motifs of biblical thought and anthropology”.<sup>578</sup> He argues that the concept of “anamnesis” is in sync with Paul’s use of it in his letter to the Romans:

When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness...”<sup>579</sup>

He goes on to quote Basil who said that the “love of God” is a necessity imposed by our rational nature rather than a discipline imposed by external circumstance. This “spark of divine love” is an inherent capacity given to us by God to enable us to obey Him. This is what makes it possible for us to distinguish the “good” and the “bad”. He then argues:

This means that the so-called first ontological level of the phenomenon of conscience consists in the fact that something like an original memory of the good and true (they are identical) has been implanted in us, that there is an inner ontological tendency within man, who is created in the likeness of God, towards the divine. From its origin, man’s being resonates with some things and clashes with others. This anamnesis of the origin, which results from the god-like constitution of our being, is not a conceptually articulated knowing, a store of retrievable contents. It is, so to

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<sup>576</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *On Conscience* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press), p. 29

<sup>577</sup> *Ibid.* p. 30

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.* p. 31

<sup>579</sup> Romans 2:14-15 cited by Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, p. 31

... speak, an inner sense, a capacity to recall, so that the one whom it addresses, if he is not turned in on himself, hears its echo from within. He sees: That's it! That is what my nature points to and seeks.<sup>580</sup>

The above encapsulates all that is vital to this research regarding “anamnesis of origin”.

As our title for this segment indicates, we are applying this *anamnesis* of origin (“original memory of the good and true”) to not just the individual person but even more critically to the moral community. We argue that it is not just the individual that recalls within oneself this “original memory of the good and true” but the community as well. Every community at some point in their history necessarily needs to retrieve this original idea of what the “good and true” *is* or *should* be especially when there is evident signs it has become either distorted or ambiguous. Obviously, in line with the insight we gleaned from Wojtyla on the *I-thou* relationship above in the constitution of the community, it is to the degree the individual *subjects of the community* are open to themselves and each other would the possibility of a shared vision of the good and true be realized. It is the degree of openness to the good and true of each subject that enables or triggers a “recall” of it within oneself and the subsequent openness to each other (and one another) results in a shared vision (*without*) of what they have gleaned from *within*. The closer the relationship, the deeper the trust and the bond of unity witnessed in the community.

Ratzinger stresses the significance of the relationship between the “within” and “without” when he asserts there exists a “constant dialogue between the *within* and the *without*.”<sup>581</sup> He argues in reference to the “Christian memory” which though is “always learning” but also

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<sup>580</sup> Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, p. 32

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.* p. 35

“distinguishes *from within* what is genuine unfolding of its recollection and what is its destruction and falsification.”<sup>582</sup> It is only from the purview of this *within-without dialogue* that he locates the proper role of the papacy and the Church in its role and authority to teach and educate the Christian conscience. He insists that the anamnesis of the good and true that is “instilled” in our nature (*within*) needs the “assistance from *without* so that it can become aware of itself.”<sup>583</sup> Therefore, the power exercised by the Pope is merely the power of being an “advocate of the Christian memory” which he never imposes from without but “elucidates” and “defends it”.<sup>584</sup> He then concludes that “all the power that the Papacy has is the power of conscience”.<sup>585</sup> It fights against all that threaten to destroy this memory – especially the “subjectivity forgetful of its own foundation,” and the “pressures of social and cultural conformity.”<sup>586</sup> The foregoing on the papacy is not only a powerful claim but it provides an equally powerful insight. It underscores not only the significance of conscience for Christian faith but even more so at a broader level of the equally “sacred mores” that hold society together.

If “pagans” (according to Paul) “have the law written in their hearts” as a proof of God’s divine imprint, their articulation of the “good and true” remains *sacred* memory even though, as Ratzinger observes with respect to Christian memory, is constantly in need of purification and expansion. This is why we insist on the power of the moral voice of the community not only for the development of individual conscience but for its purification and preservation. It is precisely

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<sup>582</sup> *Ibid* The stress is his.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.* p. 34

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.* p. 36

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*

the creative dialogue between the individual and community that makes the retrieval of the sacred imprint of the good and true possible. The *ideal I* is actualized only in dialogue with a “thou” and/or “we”. Conversely, the *ideal community* is realized to the degree this “creative dialogue” is allowed and reflectively moderated. It is captured by the category “participation” in Selznick’s characterization of “elements of community” above. **Edward Sapir** prefers to speak of “creative participation” between individual members as critical to realizing the “consensus” we call “culture” (with reference to past heritages).<sup>587</sup> In other words, each individual plays a critical part in *creating* and *sustaining* the kind of society they live in or hope to live in.

If individuals “participate” in creative dialogue aimed at building up the community, they impact upon it as they are impacted by it. As “responders” (who reflect on actions done to them) their interactivity become “creative” by first being “disruptive”.<sup>588</sup> The “creative dialogue” we have in mind here is *essentially critical of all status quo and all novelty*. It subjects every value to the test of the *really* good and true precisely because it can recall its own memory of it only through creative dialogue. The “disruptive” nature of this dialogue is essential to the purification of both individual and collective memory of the good and true. It is the core of what it takes to retrieve and retain the moral voice of the community as well as purify and retain an active conscience. A useful illustration of such creative dialogue is one that began after the sub-prime mortgage crisis in the United States. The *consumerist culture* that lured millions into an

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<sup>587</sup> Edward Sapir, “Why Anthropology Needs the Psychiatrist,” In *Selected Writings of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture, and Personality*. D. Mandelbaum, ed. (Berkeley University of California Press, 1968), p. 321

<sup>588</sup> We note that at the most superficial level of dialogue, mutuality is maintained only by allowing the status quo to be maintained – even in face of gross abuses (the common aphorism says, “don’t rock the boat”). But “creative dialogue” essentially “rocks the boat” because it wants to ensure that it is safe to take this boat into deeper waters. At this level, “creative dialogue” is first “disruptive” before it achieves “creative equilibrium” – “creative” at this level means what it implies: it is life-giving. Creative dialogue therefore questions all inherited ‘customs’ and “traditions” to evaluate their truth content and value in the light of an inherent memory of the true and good.

incredible but totally avoidable debt was up for critical review. It is still an ongoing process. Though it is unfortunate that this has to be forced upon the community by difficult life circumstances, but it is important to note that it is often “difficult life situations” that creates the conditions for *calling forth* the deeper inner resources that births all forms of transformation of individuals and cultures. The middle-east “spring” is another typical more recent example.

In the light of the above we also argue that the “voice of God” that “echoes in our depths”<sup>589</sup> (conscience) is *doubly mediated* by the peculiarity of both the individual and the community. It is not a “monotone” one hears in a solitary “pure vertical relationship” but is realized at the intersection of the vertical and horizontal poles of Divine-human interaction. It is heard as a “harmony” of voices in the midst of the moral community, and can neither be *heard* nor *formed* without reference to the other, a concrete community. We stress with Niebuhr that at the core of conscience is the approval or disapproval of my conduct based on my readings of “patterns of relationship”<sup>590</sup> in a community of *be-ing*. Therefore without this approval or disapproval within a nexus of being, the “voice of conscience” will neither be formed nor could it be heard. It implies the sanctity of conscience has a communal basis – drawing from both poles of relationship. It is “sacred” because it is essentially a “memory” of that “good” (value) which the community had approved and *held as sacred in the past, continues to hold or forgotten to hold as sacred, or simply needs to learn to hold as sacred*. A negation of that “good” and/or “value” is what each community describes as “evil” (good or bad; and right or wrong, when

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<sup>589</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, n.16

<sup>590</sup> R. Niebuhr explains that “my conscience represents not so much my awareness of the approvals and disapprovals of other individuals in isolation as of the ethos of my society, that is, of its mode of interpersonal interactions.” Eric Mount, Jr. agreeing with Niebuhr view but adds that “[T]he others in whose presence the self knows itself are, to a large extent, not freely chosen despite the attempts we make at evading the judgments of some others and our preoccupations with the judges we think we want to please most.” See *Conscience and Responsibility*, p. 57.

acted upon). To value this content of memory as “sacred” is to be open to community – a primary step to self-transcendence. It implies openness to the voice of conscience deep within oneself and in the voice of the moral community.

The vertical pole (within) completes but does not replace the communal pole as another aperture for disclosure in the process of self-transcendence (for the individual) that both sustains the content of community’s sacred symbols as well as sets it up for critical review in a *dialogical reciprocity* or the “creative dialogue” that we identified as the precursor of change. This conjunction of openness (the vertical and horizontal aperture of disclosure), sustain the unique mystery each individual and his/her conscience remains as well as sustains the possibility of encounter with Truth. It is precisely why we can say that God speaks to us deep within our soul through our conscience, and the complement to this is a Nigerian (Igbo) proverb that says: [*onu madu bu onu Chukwu*] “the voice of the people is the voice of God.” God speaks to us *in* and *through* the community even as he speaks *through* us to the community as we lend our “voice” to the shaping and molding of our community according to the ideal community we envision through *creative dialogue*. The role of the Church in such a dynamic is to help purify and maintain the quality of the moral voice of the community and of individual conscience by pointing both to harmonize with Gospel values. It achieves this by providing the context and direction of this dialogue and thus helps in the proper formation of both the individual conscience and that of the community. It makes sense then to affirm with Ratzinger that the Magisterium “has no power except that of conscience.”



### 3.7.0 SOCIO-MORAL PATHOLOGIES OF THE COMMUNITY

One of the greatest modern tragedies on the African continent is the 1994 Rwandan fratricidal genocide.<sup>591</sup> That such a tragedy could happen in a largely Catholic country forces a question: “What went wrong with the people and the Gospel?” Attempts at answering that question reveal how the Churches played a part in institutionalizing a “genocidal mentality” when it allowed itself to be immersed in the existing “divisions of a divided and stratified society.”<sup>592</sup> The unfortunate result was that these tribal divisions become “baptized” and institutionalized as “good” in the perception of the people. This provided the Rwandan political leadership, known for their Catholic piety, a justification that only emboldened and reinforced their bloodlust. This ironical “baptism” of evil in Rwanda only repeats what we have seen somewhere else: the “Christianization of racial oppression” as witnessed in the United States (especially in the South) during its inglorious history of slavery and the bitter fight to eradicate it. The lesson is simple: whenever the Church immerses itself in existing divisions, uncritically assimilated ideology transmutes into “the Gospel” and directly or indirectly helps in institutionalizing evil, and as such does more harm than good over time. Therefore, a critical aspect in the process of incarnating the Gospel in a given context ought to begin with a proper descriptive understanding (a phenomenological assessment) of the socio-moral context. This is the concern that informs this segment of our research.

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<sup>591</sup> We recognize similarity of this genocide to that of Burundi where minority Tusti tried to eliminate majority Hutu in 1973, 1988, 1993.

<sup>592</sup> See Ian Linden, “The Churches and Genocide: Lessons from Rwandan Tragedy,” *The Month* (July 1995), 261; Andrew Mason has argued earlier that “A group of people might count as a community in the ordinary sense but not the moralized sense. They might share values and a way of life, identify with the group and its practices, and regard each other as members, whilst systematically exploiting one another” Mason, *Community, Op. Cit.* p. 32

### 3.7.1

## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Socio-moral “pathology”<sup>593</sup> is defined in this research as “*diseases of the mind*” that affect both individuals and whole communities such that it shapes behavior and attitudes that eventually result in great harm to others (and ultimately oneself). These “diseases of the mind” are revealed in *actions* and *mental attitudes* of a given person or social group that seeks to undermine the ultimate growth and development of another human person, a distinct group of persons, or the whole of the human community. In other words, it is identifiable through *actions* and *attitudes* inimical to individuals, social groupings, ethnicities, nationalities. It could be revealed in actions and/or mental attitudes that seek to alienate rather than integrate; divide rather than unite; oppress rather than liberate; obscure rather than reveal; enslave rather than empower; kill rather than heal; destroy rather than create; corrupt rather than vivify any single member and/or group of the human community at any given time. In this wise, it could be revealed not just in actions or attitudes but in philosophies and ideologies, customs and mores, religious doctrines and cultural ethos that seeks to achieve any of the above negative possibilities.

We prefer “pathology” to vices and sins not because these latter are conceptually redundant or incapable of articulating the socio-moral reality we are analyzing, but because we consider “pathology” as not only capable of provoking attention to a modern audience it also conveys a nuance of meaning to an increasingly secular society deaf to any notion of *vice* and/or *sin*. Moreover, the notion of “pathology” refers to the “origins of a disease” and/or any deviation

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<sup>593</sup> Steven J. Bartlett provides a deep and broad historical analysis of this concept and its appropriateness in understanding moral evil in contemporary culture. He distinguishes “lanthanic, chronic, active, and acute as degrees of pathology, where “lanthanic” represents ignorance of a disease that is present which makes it even more dangerous depending on the nature of the disease. See *The Pathology of Man, Loc. Cit.*, pp.13-67, at 40

from a healthy, normal, or effective condition that we consider functionally more effective in conveying a sense of what is happening to the community as a socio-moral entity.

We started this chapter by pointing to the universality of moral corruption. We have distinguished the constitution of “communities” as against “contractual societies” and their implication for moral responsibility. Our analysis shows that “societies” by promoting “individualism” at the detriment of “community interests” expose the human community to many moral dangers. In a twist of irony, African communities founded on communalism that stress “communal” over and above individual interests does not seem to evolve (as historical data shows) more altruistic minded individuals as one would expect from the foregoing analysis.

It is a fact that the continent has produced an unprecedented number of leaders and/or dictators whose greedy appetite proved to be insatiable. They pillaged their people’s resources (and are still doing so!) showing neither pity for the suffering masses nor any evident care of the common interest of the people they serve.<sup>594</sup> They accumulate unbelievable wealth and live in equally incredible opulence even as the rest of their tribe and fellow countrymen wallow in poverty and destitution. Some own whole estates and live in expensive mansions that would be the envy of many ancient and present monarchs while their people still live in shacks. Some have fleets of “private jets” and most boast of owning not just fleets of cars but driving the best of exquisite cars even though the roads remain death-traps for *all users* and the creative imagination of African “geniuses” are left to rot away or leave for greener pastures abroad such that

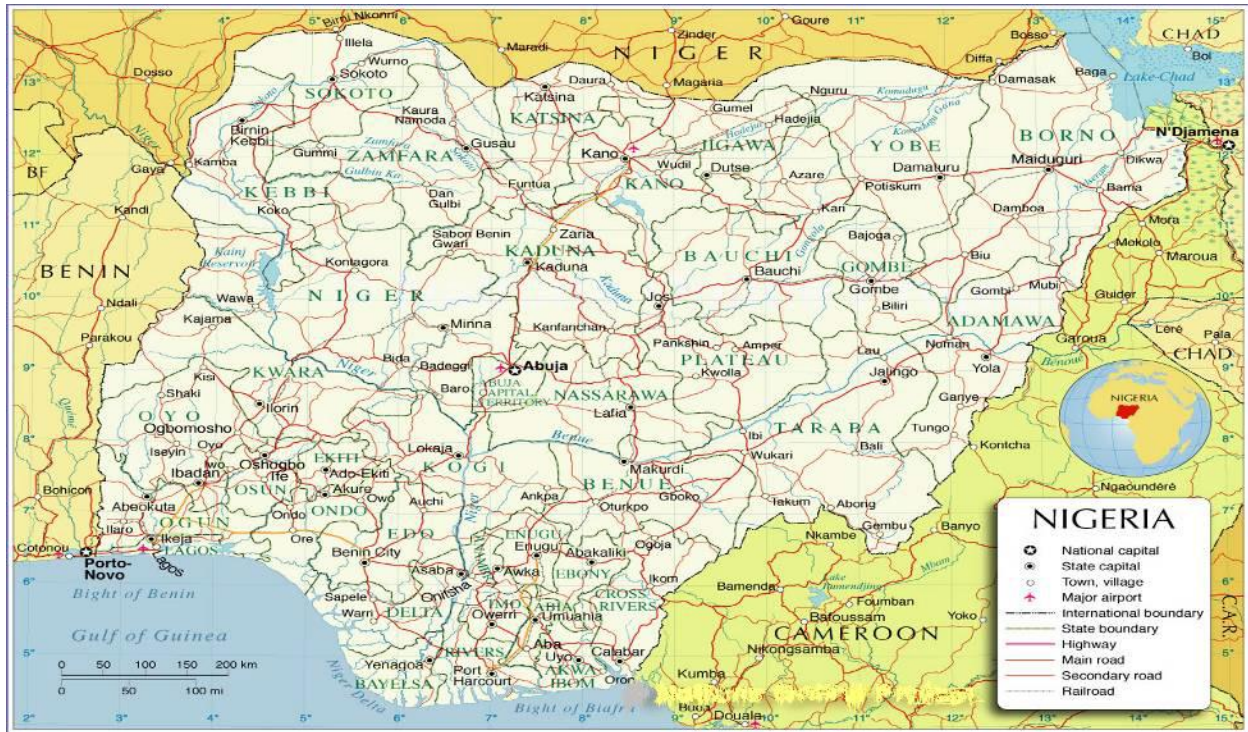
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<sup>594</sup> George Ayittey in a recent TED Conference characterized these leaders as the “Hippo generation” (an allusion to Hippopotamus) of leadership that “swallow” the resources of the land without thought to the consequences. He distinguished them from emerging “Chita generation” of leaders whose intent is to create wealth and grow African talents and resources for the common good of all.

innovative dreams like building the “first African car!” remains a virtual impossibility in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. How is this situation possible?

The hard question is, “how could a communalistic model of formation give birth to these monsters of selfishness?” We do not intend to offer a simplistic answer as we do recognize that there is no evident guarantee communalism would necessarily *eradicate* the native drive towards selfishness. The assumption is that it should *mitigate* it if the primary argument is true. Hence, the greater difficulty is coming to terms with the *degree* or “excessiveness” to which greed (as selfishness) is practiced in the continent. It is practiced to absurd proportions in Nigeria. In contradistinction to the principles of communalism enshrined in basic formation process. It is either something is wrong with the claims on communalism or something is wrong with the system. It is even possible it is both, but we prefer to stay with the later. We look for patterns because they provide a more objective criterion for universal application. Each community needs to uncover what is peculiar to their situation. But a closer look at the communalistic model reveals an *inherent pathology* one of which we will now attempt to identify and analyze. The Nigerian community is our chosen context. We will identify two primary pathologies (*tribalism* and *superstitious mentality*) as feeding other ancillary “pathologies” (like excessive greed, excessive materialism, corruption, cronyism, chronic fear of the unknown, witchcraft mania, material and spiritual dependency). These identified “pathologies” are far from exhaustive. Though space will only allow us an analysis of one: Tribalism, yet it provides us sufficient reason to argue that the *communalistic model* we have in Nigeria today (and Africa by extension) is most probably in need of critical review or reconstruction.

## Illustration: A Map of Nigeria



Source: Nations Online Project: [http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/nigeria\\_map2.htm](http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/nigeria_map2.htm)

### 3.7.2 PRIMARY PATHOLOGIES OF THE NIGERIAN COMMUNITY

Nigeria is a sovereign nation in sub-Saharan Africa. Its geographic coordinates are: 10 00 N, 8 00 E. It is bordered by Niger on the North, the Atlantic on the South, Benin republic on the West, and Cameroon on the East. Its landmass is approximately 923, 768 sq. Km. The census figure of 2006 affirms that there are 150 million people in it constituted by people of different ethnic identities and language groups. Though political power is formerly shared among three main ethnic groups (Hausa, in the North, Yoruba in the South-West, and Igbo in the South-East), however, the reality is that there are in Nigeria today 371 identifiably distinct ethnic groups based on language differences.<sup>595</sup> This is an incredible variation! Social scientists will have fun studying these variations and how they impact the constitution and dynamism of the country itself. These different ethnicities were amalgamated into one political unit called Nigeria by the British colonial power in 1914 (the Northern and Southern protectorates included all these ethnic nationalities). One obvious quality that this rainbow coalition bequeaths to the nation, as of necessity, is a strong sense of ethnic identity.

Some argue that we do not have a nation as such but a conglomeration of ethnic nationalities held together by artificial cleavages. They have a valid point given that the idea of one nation called “Nigeria” has never been subjected to a plebiscite or referendum. Therefore, many of these ethnic “nationalities” feel rather coerced into a union that they have little or no reason to validate. An attempt was even made by the Igbos (a major ethnic group) to secede in 1966 but resulted in civil war that Chinua Achebe, recently categorized in his latest book (*There*

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<sup>595</sup> For a more comprehensive list of tribes and their locations, see “Tribes in Nigeria” published here: Online Nigeria.com, [www.onlinenigeria.com](http://www.onlinenigeria.com)

*was a Country*), as genocide.<sup>596</sup> Since then some of the minor ethnic groups, especially the Niger Delta people (South-South) in whose land the Nigerian crude is mainly produced, have recently taken to arms and demanding the control of their oil and/or self-government that they know cannot be granted. Each time, political settlements and a subtle formula for power sharing have provided the basis for maintaining a fragile sense of peace. To then assert that the above scenario creates serious difficulties for nation building is at best an understatement.

Be that as it may, the hard fact is that we have one country we can call our own. Many ethnic nationalities around the world passed through the anguish of years of bitter wars to form a country. We should consider it an advantage not to have gone through that (except for the Igbos who are still licking their wounds). There is a certain advantage in numbers if its potentials are properly harnessed for growth and development. Nigeria has the largest population in the continent. Evidence from history indicates that it is not the first nation to be constituted by many divergent ethnic groups.<sup>597</sup> What is lacking is perhaps a home-grown philosophical framework for nation-building complete with an adequate power-sharing formula and/or a compelling ideology that forges the political will to freely choose to form a formidable union that will be the envy of the continent. It has both the human and natural resources to do so. The “pathologies” we now identify and describe are intended to underscore the major ailments that obfuscate the vision of nation building particularly in Nigeria but could be applicable elsewhere in the continent.

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<sup>596</sup> Chinua Achebe, *There was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra, Kindle Edition* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012), pp. 227-241

<sup>597</sup> The United States, Britain, Canada, and Soviet Union are but obvious examples of nations constituted by divergent ethnic nationalities but were able to forge a union that benefits them.

### 3.7.3 TRIBALISM AS A PRIMARY PATHOLOGY

I identify the fundamental cause of Nigeria's problems as the lack of unity and solidarity of her peoples. Nigeria suffers from the paralysis of selfishness. She is yet to become a nation. She is, at best, a collection of nations, at worst, a state held together at gunpoint... In the absence of solidarity, and with the perpetuation of religious and ethnic divisions by some leaders, we have a situation where Nigerians are found to be incapable of building a just and humane nations they and generations yet unborn can be proud of. In a multiethnic and multi-religious land like ours, unity of vision and purpose is an indispensable requirement for nation building.<sup>598</sup>

In the light of the above epigraph, we reach deeper to identify *tribalism* as the primary reason for "lack of unity and solidarity" in Nigeria and indeed Africa.<sup>599</sup> It is therefore our answer to the question as to what constitutes the greatest obstacle to nation building in Nigeria. In our judgment, it is the quintessential pathology because it is at the core of how self-interest is unleashed on a grand scale in traditional societies. It is for that reason critical to understanding conscience formation as well. Note however that this research does acknowledge the value or the positive attributes of "tribes". Actually some modern cooperate groups are actually being

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<sup>598</sup> Anthony O. Akinwale, *The Congress and The Council: Towards a Nigerian Reception of Vatican II* (Ibadan, Stirling-Horden Publishers, 2003), pp. 19-20

<sup>599</sup> Cardinal Roger Etchegaray (Rwandan Papal envoy), pleaded that the "waters of baptism" should be allowed to flow deeper than the "blood of tribalism" implying how deeply rooted this vice is. See J.J. Kritzinger, "The Rwandan Tragedy as Public Indictment of Christian Mission," *Missionalia* 24:3, 1996, p. 345. In the *Lineamenta for Ecclesia in Africa*, the synod of bishops underscored the point of the disastrous effects of tribalism when they say, "ethnic divisions and tensions" can lead to "disastrous crimes," and pleaded for a stop to "negative forms of solidarity" that originates from a stress on the "ethnic group." This could be done without undermining the significance of ethnic groups. See *Lineamenta*, nos. 17, 64, 67 cited by Jay, J. Carney, "Waters of Baptism, Blood of Tribalism," *African Ecclesia Review* vol. 50 (March- June, 2008): 23-24



organized along tribal alliances for effectiveness.<sup>600</sup> Based on our analysis in chapter two, a purely psychological consideration of the value of ethnic solidarities reveals that we form our primary identities from basic associations such as found in families and primary communities (our kinship relationships). The love and support that they provide us is an invaluable anchor that is irreplaceable in life.

However, the notion of “tribalism” as used here has a purely negative connotation. It is a “disease of the mind” because it *refers to an evident and unwarranted prejudice towards members of a different ethnicity that result in an uncritical favoring of one’s ethnic members in all matters, irrespective of merit, and at the detriment of others (outside one’s ethnic group)*. Like racism or xenophobia, it is prejudice based solely on ethnic difference. We consider it the greatest obstacle to nation building not so much for its preferences (for one’s tribe, or “in-group”) but more importantly for its *prejudices* and how this feeds other major pathologies (especially corruption). Tribalism makes one *blind* to the defects and inadequacies of its own kin and the merits and inherent good qualities of the other tribe[s].

Now this does not mean individuals have not formed friendships and alliances across tribal lines. These are exceptions. Our concern here is with the norm, not the exceptions. Tribal sentimentality has blinded Nigerians from *identifying* and harnessing the inherent strength or

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<sup>600</sup> Dave Logan, *et al*, has argued in *Tribal Leadership* that forming tribes is almost part of our genetic code. As they argue, “Tribes helped human survive the last ice age, build farming communities, and, later, cities. Birds flock, fishes school, humans “tribe””. They would however argue that tribal culture evolve and develop in five distinct stages: life sucks, my life sucks, I’m Ok, you are not, we’re great, and life is beautiful. It is the role of the tribal leader to help each tribe upgrade from the lowest dumps to the height of achievement and as a group. This is study for cooperate leadership but may provide some useful insight on the inherent value of “tribes” in general. See *Tribal Leadership: Leveraging Natural Groups to Build a Thriving Organization* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers, 2008) p. 3+

*celebrating* the unique gifts of the different ethnic configurations in its demography and is ironically impoverished by what ought to constitute its riches.<sup>601</sup>

Thomas and Znaniecki argue that every cultural problem is *mediated* to the individual through his primary group by way of socialization (“social education”) such that we relate to others based on the attitude of our social group towards them.<sup>602</sup> In other words, the discriminative and prejudicial attitudes towards other tribes are learnt in the bosom of the family and primary community. Gordon Allport writing in *The Nature of Prejudice* asserts as follows:

There is one law – universal in all human societies – that assists us in making an important prediction. *In every society on earth the child is regarded as a member of his parents’ groups.* He belongs to the same race, stock, family tradition, religion, caste, and occupational status. To be sure, in our society, he may when he grows older escape certain of these memberships, but not all. The child is ordinarily expected to acquire his parents’ loyalties and prejudices; and if the parent because of his group-membership is an object of prejudice, the child too is automatically victimized.<sup>603</sup>

Old prejudices that are sometimes centuries old live on in the family and tribe and transferred consciously or unconsciously from one generation to the next without justification. We know that long before the European scramble for Sub-Saharan Africa, the different ethnic communities lived in mutual [dis]trust of other groups. Different forms of alliances (like inter-tribal marriages) were the primary sources of brokering peace.

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<sup>601</sup> Peter Ekeh’s classical argument on the “two publics” (the tribe and the state) remain relevant to this issue as to why there is loyalty to the tribe and none to the state. But we are looking at this problem from a different lens – the deeper psycho-moral roots. See Peter Ekeh, “Colonialism and the two Publics in Africa: A Historical Statement,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* vol. 17, 1 (1975): 91-112

<sup>602</sup> See W. I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (Boston: Badger, 1918, vol. II, 1881, cited by Gordon Allport in *The Nature of Prejudice*, p. 212. We acknowledge the distinction Allport made between “in-group” and “reference-group” where the latter is preferred to the former based on personal interests. G. Allport, *ibid.* p. 37-38

<sup>603</sup> Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice: 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 31

Historically, there were constant inter-and-intra-tribal aggression and war among the different tribes of Nigeria before and even after the arrival of the white missionaries.<sup>604</sup> These old aggressions left deep psychological wounds and built walls of distrust and prejudice through generations to this day<sup>605</sup> and across tribal lineages: The *Igbos* hardly trust the *Yorubas* and vice versa, the same could be said of the Hausa towards the Igbo and the Yoruba, and vice versa. The same is the case with the other tribes: *Ijaws* for the *Itshekiris*, among others, often increasing in intensity to the degree of geographical affinity revealing its roots in old rivalry. The dynamic repeats itself within the tribes: there is prejudice and distrust of the *Ijebu*-person by non-*Ijebus* in Yoruba-land. The Onitsha man distrusts the *Obosi* man based on old rivalry; and the average Igbo person considers an Onitsha indigene as more *Ika-igbo* (not full-blooded Igbo) than Igbo and the Onitsha man looks down on the rest of Igbo land as captured by the cynicism underlying the phrase: “*nwa onye-igbo*” (child of Igbo person) often used by the Onitsha person. The same distrust is evident among “*Ika-Igbos*” of the Delta region for indigenes of Igbo-heartland. In Hausa-land this dynamic is even more complex. Apart from the Hausa Fulani found mainly in the North-west, the North-East and North-Central are probably the most heterogeneous region in the entire country; and most do not necessarily consider themselves as Hausas even though they use Hausa language to communicate across ethnic lines (among these are the *Jukun*, the *Tivs*, the

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<sup>604</sup> See A. A. Akande, “The Impact of Intertribal Wars on Mission Work in Nigeria,” in *African Mission Report*, Jan 6, 2011; P. O. Olatokunbosun, *The History of West Africa* (Ilesa, Nigeria: Fatiregun Press, 1981); Ray I. Jacob, “A Historical Survey of Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria,” *Asia Social Science*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (4:2012); B. Salami, “Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria: Causal Analysis and Proposal for New Management Strategies,” *European Journal of Social Sciences*, Volume 13:3 (2010), 345-353.

<sup>605</sup> Many consider the root causes of present day ethno-religious violence as a more complex social political phenomenon. Andrew Kakabadse was cited by Meg Handley as implicating oil companies who sometimes pitch ethnic groups against each other for economic reasons (See Langley, “The Violence in Nigeria: What is Behind it?” *Time Magazine*, March 10, 2010).

kataf, the Bura, the Marghi, to name just a few). There are hundreds more.<sup>606</sup> Is it possible that this generational rivalry and distrust could be overcome?<sup>607</sup>

We noted in chapter one Thomas Hobbes' argument that man is by nature brutish and wired for self-interest. He identifies three primary causes of quarrels among human tribes. Firstly, given that we have to compete for same resources, people invade others to dispossess them (personal or communal gain). Secondly, fear of losing our life and property impels us to constant defensiveness as a safety measure in a hostile environment. Thirdly, we take pride in the reputation inherent in winning wars. Gordon Allport who actually cites this argument in his theory of prejudice agrees with its claims but not its roots causes. He rejects the claim that hostility is a "root instinct" or "basic power drive" in human nature by merely pointing to wide spread conflicts in the history of cultures. According to him, experience and experiments point in a different direction – it mostly depends on the *love* and *care* children receive when they are little. When we watch children we notice that that what they care for is love and affection. Hostility only arises as a response to "frustration and disappointment." Therefore to claim that "negative attitudes towards people are more basic than affiliative attitudes is to reverse the time sequence," and misrepresent the order of needs as we actually find it in human nature.<sup>608</sup>

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<sup>606</sup> See Mark Amaza, "The North that Southerners don't Know" in *Economic Confidential*, May 15, 2012.

<sup>607</sup> The historicity of inter-tribal conflicts in Nigeria (and other African nations) provides hindsight to question some views that suggests African Traditional religions (and society) consider "intolerance anathema" (See E.E Uzukwu, *God, Spirits, and Human Wholeness*, p. 54) given that tribal conflict was common and there was no unifying political structure to test the validity of claims of tolerance in ATR across ethnicity. Moreover, it is arguable that "intolerance" is not implied in the "pragmatic" orientation to choice of deities among Igbos. However given that the Igbos are tolerant of other religions provides a basis to argue that plurality of gods helped them evolve religious tolerance so long as it does not interfere with what they themselves believe!

<sup>608</sup> See Gordon Allport, *Ibid.* pp. 214-5

However, he admits that the *frustration theory* of prejudice is a more probable option given that it admits hostile attitudes or hatred as part of our nature but makes no wild claims as to it being more basic than love. He likewise admits the claims of another theory involving human nature that argues that “insecure” people are more prone to “develop prejudice as an important feature” or personality trait. He argues:

This theory stresses the importance of early training, pointing out that most highly prejudiced people have lacked a secure and affectionate relationship with their own parents. For this reason, or others, they grow up craving definiteness, finality, authority in all their human relationships – and this pattern lends them to exclude and fear groups that seem less familiar and safe than their own.<sup>609</sup>

In the light of the above we might need to raise some critical questions. If we need to trace the roots of wide spread prejudice as found in tribalism, we should critically evaluate not just the rational for recycling old rivalry that have lost their relevance in the present dispensation, but even more pertinently our basic childhood formation.<sup>610</sup>

Generational transfer of hostility between tribes may in large part provide clues to tribalism but poor child rearing practices could trigger other ills that find expression in excesses relating to greed, power, and sex that we see exhibited daily by our leaders. One obvious question is “How adequate is the model of child rearing in Nigeria/Africa?” This research does not intend to answer this question for obvious reasons of scope. However, just a cursory

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<sup>609</sup> Gordon Allport, *Ibid.* p. 216

<sup>610</sup> There will be obvious attack on such views as this due to a skewed logic that sees every criticism (internal or external) as a devaluation of African way of life. The reality is that a people that do not engage in self-criticism or an evaluation of its practices will self-destruct. An Igbo proverb says, “onye amaghi ebe mmiri bidoro maba ya agaghi ama ebe ono zee ya” (he who does not know where rain started beating him will not know where he was sheltered from it).

comment, apart from all that could be said in the positive, we wish to affirm that most Nigerian cultures still maintain that “if you spare the rod you spoil the child.”<sup>611</sup> Many Nigerian children passed through (and still ongoing) very tough childhood rearing-culture that leaves one wondering not just the degree of psychological scars they live with but even more critical is the degree of affection that was (is being) imparted during the critical formation years. Add to this the fact that mainstream Nigerian culture does not have a habit of “verbal expression” of affection. Is it then not proper to ask, “if a child grows up with lots of spanking, and without ever hearing the parents, or anybody for that matter, say to him/her “I love you,” does this impose any serious defect?” If we employ the insights of our psychological analysis in Chapter two to such a scenario, the highly probable result would be a whole class of dysfunctions that implies equally dysfunctional adults: part of which includes adults perpetually in search of love but only in its disguises or symbols: sex, money, and power. Given what we now know of many of our leaders, is it not possible that their abysmal failures are rooted in morbid dysfunctions than in conscious choices? We hope a more extensive research be done in this area by scholars in the field of behavioral sciences in Nigeria/Africa.<sup>612</sup>

Given scholarly consensus that there is an enormous influence of environment on who we become, we think it is time we begin to take this more seriously in Nigerian formation process.

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<sup>611</sup> It is yet to be seen if this ancient wisdom is completely wrong. The present culture in the West that eschews in absolute terms all forms of “spanking” may be proved in time to be a mistake. We do not see any problem with a moderate use of spanking as part of a robust system of discipline.

<sup>612</sup> The Nigerian child most likely learns love through other body languages apart from speech expression. We are more physically (than verbally) expressive of love. What he/she lacked from verbal expression was likely compensated through physical expressions like “touch” (mandatory breast-feeding, backing, cuddling, etc), and the constant physical “presence” of the mother or the surrogate. Moreover at the present time, the verbal component is being added in some homes. So change is already happening.

For instance, it is still common practice that many children often below the age of ten serve as nannies, house-helpers, and business helpers (if you are a boy) long before they are supposed to leave the warmth and comfort of their parent's homes. In chapter two we understand these to be critical years for formation of a variety of vital identities and affectations. Often these children are maltreated in their new homes. There are many horrible stories of child-abuse in the system and we now know its implication for malformation and development. But the practice is still a current reality. Even though we did not set out to analyze childrearing protocol in Nigeria but it does seem a passing glance at it warrants the need for a second look. There is a possibility that our child-rearing practices need a critical review that this research cannot offer.

However, it is fair to argue from the above, that if prejudice results from "frustration and disappointment" or due to "insecurity" resulting from lack of love and affection (implying poor rearing practices), then, we may not have to look too far to see part of the root causes of tribal prejudices in Nigeria (and perhaps Africa). It is perhaps more convenient to argue simply that it is a *socialized behavior* – it is learnt through *miming* the prejudicial attitudes of our parents and older members of our tribe.<sup>613</sup> But we do not limit this to merely "miming" alone. Rather, we suggest that perhaps "insecurity" that results from poor rearing practices could add significant content to the peculiarity of Nigerian tribal prejudices.

Allport's analysis of his theory of prejudice is formulated under six major headings based on their areas of emphasis: 1. The *Historical perspective* places emphasis on the historicity, and therefore, the specificity of each human conflict and the prejudice underlying it. The Marxist

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<sup>613</sup> Mark Heim argues forcefully on the relationship between sin and the "mimetic character" of our nature". See "A Cross-section of Sin: The Mimetic Character of Human Nature in Biological and Theological Perspective," in *Evolution and Ethics: Human Morality in Biological and Religious Perspective, Loc. Cit.*, pp. 255-269

strain of this argument identifies “economic exploitation” as the reason for whipping up prejudice and discriminative behavior (examples are the Jews under Hitler, and racist sentiments against Negroes in the United States). While this supports Hobbes view of “rationalized self-interest” above but it fails to account for why not *all* persons within the same historical context develop prejudice.

2. The *Socio-cultural perspective* emphasize how native fear invoked by socio-cultural concerns like “urbanization” results in prejudice and discriminative behavior against all perceived symbols of whatever monster is assumed to be responsible for destroying all that is familiar and secure (Jews were hated in New York at a time for serving as a “symbol of the city life” that is destroying long-held values). This perspective indicates a generational transfer of animosity; it implies that individuals inherit, assimilate or imitate the prejudicial judgments of their parents and ancestors. We have noted earlier the validity of this argument even as we point out its irrational basis.

3. The *Situational perspective* refers to theories of prejudice that place emphasis not on the historical past but on the present circumstances of a people. There are varieties of this argument. One we consider critical is “atmosphere theory” that argues that a child/adult reflects the kind of environment he grows up or lives in. Supposing a child did not inherit prejudice from his parents in the village but moving to the city, encounters a different mindset, one of alienation and discrimination, he eventually *reflects* what he *perceives*. We intend to develop further this theory in the next segment because of its critical importance.



4. The *Psychodynamic perspective* is one that traces the roots of prejudice in the primary drive for power (or self-interest) inherent in human nature as was reflected in Hobbes' argument above.

5. The *Phenomenological perspective* stress that our actions generally, not just our sentiments, proceed "immediately" from our "view of the situation" we confront. This seems similar to the "situational perspective" above but has a phenomenological emphasis (as method) that makes it distinct. The two perspectives can actually be combined. Allport puts it this way:

His response to the world conforms to his definition of the world. He attacks members of one group because he perceives them as repulsive, annoying, or threatening; members of another he derides because to him they are crude, dirty, and stupid. Both visibility and verbal labels, as we have seen, help define the object in perception so that it can be readily identified.... Obviously, the stereotype plays a prominent part in sharpening the perception prior to action.<sup>614</sup>

This perspective does illuminate some aspects of our peculiar context. For instance, some Igbo people are often puzzled by the degree of hostility and prejudice that they perceive from other tribes. Perhaps this provides opportunity for introspection on possible unwholesome cultural attitudes that may be peculiar to them that other tribes consider "repulsive, annoying, or threatening." The same is true for other tribes. Such discovery could perhaps lead to *targeted civic education* aimed at eliminating one root cause of tribal prejudice.

As an example, it is a self-evident truth that the average Igbo person is achievement oriented, and so he works very hard, is rugged and can succeed in the most difficult conditions, travels wide in search of opportunities, is a developer (makes a home where he goes), and is very generous to causes he subscribes to (especially to his religious community). This is perhaps why they constitute (as individuals) the single most successful major *block* of people in Nigeria.

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<sup>614</sup> Allport, *Ibid.* p. 216

However, the average Igbo person is also known to be rather crude, obnoxious, confrontational, as thrifty as the Jew, and most Nigerians will add, he has a vexing “I too know” mentality.

Obviously, these are neither qualities that nurture inter-tribal relations nor any relation for that matter.<sup>615</sup> Despite this, it is still to their credit that they seem to get along well with others given that they are widely travelled and virtually inhabit most corners of the country and the globe. A saying in Nigeria is, “where an Igbo-man does not survive, nothing can survive.”

6. *Earned Reputation perspective* traces the causes of prejudice to the “stimulus object” as such. Given that “reputation” could be either “earned” or gratuitous and as such “unmerited,” an “interaction theory” tries to link them. It argues that prejudice may result out of genuine differences or “realistic estimates of the stimulus (the true nature of groups)” and in part from “irrelevant” factors (like “scapegoating, conformity to existing tradition, stereotypes, guilt-projection,” among others).<sup>616</sup> There is evident prejudice, at least in the south of Nigeria, that the North enjoys too many *unmerited* privileges. Southerners argue that they had free education offered by government, yet they were literally *begged* to go to school. They claim leadership of the country as their “inheritance”<sup>617</sup> (from the British colonial regime) and have actually held

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<sup>615</sup> We do not have the resources to make any serious analysis of the characteristics of the different tribes here. It will mean volumes of work. But suffice it to say in passing that the average Yoruba comes across as intelligent, a lover of life, with a flowery, flamboyant attitude to life similar to a sanguine personality. At the same time, he is loquacious and/or boastful, seemingly lazy, and rather slippery such that it is common to hear, at least among the Igbo, that “a Yoruba person cannot be trusted.” The average Hausa comes across as affable, amiable, truthful, simple-minded, simple lifestyle, but at the same time, he comes across as lover of idleness, anti-education, irrational, uncritical, easily irritated or sentimental, and prone to religious fanaticism. Evidently, these are but very broad classifications over an amazingly heterogeneous demographic. But it does help to really identify how we ordinarily see ourselves if we are to understand how to purify our perceptions in order to relate better across tribal lines.

<sup>616</sup> Allport, *ibid.* p. 217

<sup>617</sup> Mallam Maitama Sule, in a speech “Why the North Leads” at his book launch has this to say, “Now this is it. We the Hausa/Fulanis are chosen specially by God to rule. No apologies to the Yorubas, no apologies to the Igbos. And thank goodness the minorities are not in doubt about this matter. All the same no apologies to them either. Our mandate to rule this country derives from the ‘tacit approval’ of God....The Igbo man like the Indians will sooner

that leadership (often by force of military dictatorships) longer than the south and as a result cornered many government privileges that the Southern tribes consider unwarranted especially given that the oil money that lubricates those privileges come from the South. In other words, they argue that the North adds nothing to the common purse but takes the bulk of federal earnings. The South-Easterners consider themselves as being systematically marginalized since after the civil war (1967-70) and they have strong evidence to prove it. The South-Southerners, from where all the oil is produced, have never been in power (except by “accident” of history with Goodluck Jonathan)<sup>618</sup> and they have since taken up arms to redress what they perceive as monumental marginalization. These are partly the “stimulus” that provide some complexity and a nuanced perspective to tribal prejudice in Nigeria.

We noted above that TRIBALISM is identified in this study as a social “pathology” partly because it conveys the idea of “roots” of a disease. It is a sociological DIS-EASE with others that has moral *roots* and implications: through discrimination and alienation it not only disrupts social relationships but actively fosters passive-aggressive behavior that is at the root of violent eruptions that was the reason for inter-tribal wars in all cultures, and more recent

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take a ‘shop’ than he will a ‘post’. To him, the ‘ego’ (money) of the market is worthier than the ego (pride) of the office. He would rather cut your throat in the open market than cut the public purse in the inner recess of an office. So you can see the Igbos and the Yorubas are not only followers by inspiration, they are by no means meek. The one is un-meeked by its polytheism as the other is shrewd by entrepreneurialism. We Hausa/Fulanis are the only ‘God-chosen’ inspired by Almighty Himself to rule. It is not of our making. We are only fulfilling God’s will on this side of the earth...So the earlier the Igbos, the Yorubas and the madding minorities come to terms with this ethereal reality, the better for the country...As for us, we swear by the ‘Mount of Sinai’ and we swear by the ‘Sea of Galilee’ that we will not shirk from our God-given responsibility. WE WILL KILL, WE WILL MAIM AND WE WILL BANISH ANY PEOPLE WHO DARE TO STAND BETWEEN US AND THIS COVENANT. Forget about rotational presidency. That is bullshit! We are the medium through which God’s kingdom on this earth shall come to pass. Jure divino!” This is cited by Adedapo Adeniran Esquire, *Nigeria: The Case of Peaceful and Friendly Dissolution* (Lagos, Nigeria: Arymson Publicity, 2008), pp. 78-79, 82.

<sup>618</sup> Goodluck Jonathan was the vice-president who coincidentally became the president after Shehu-Musa Yaradua died in office. He eventually stood for election as an incumbent and won, thus becoming the first elected president of Nigeria from the South-South or Niger Delta region.

Rwandan genocide (among others). It is also considered a socio-moral pathology in this study because it etches the idea of self-interest deeper within the psyche of its victims by emphasizing how we are *different* rather than how we are *similar* with others.<sup>619</sup>

Tribalism feeds on “distrust” of others outside of one’s kin. In so doing, it activates more readily the basic insecurity and fear in all humans that drive them toward self-preservation – but the “self” now becomes more and more exclusively defined (the less of others, the better). It is not surprising then, that it ultimately leads to distrust of all – including, in some cases, the tribe! It is a psycho-social pathology precisely because it is rooted in native insecurity that considers “outsiders” as threats to its wellbeing. It creates a false reality. Though it’s basic philosophical roots could be claimed to be utilitarian, but without utilitarian fine points that includes the greatest number. Tribalism is pathetically exclusive. It is basic self-interest that manipulates kinship solidarity as a means to its ends. It is evident then why it deforms rather than forms conscience – it hinders the primary capacity of conscience as a natural self-transcending mechanism for moral consciousness.

Tribalism is then the crudest manifestation of self-interest at the group level. It has enormous implications for social disintegration. In Nigeria it is at the root of mediocrity and inefficiency in government because positions are often filled based on tribal sentiments rather than reasons of merit. There have been too many cases of incompetent persons put in sensitive positions because he is from a particular tribe while more qualified persons go without job. It is at the root of so much looting (or corruption) we see in Nigeria (and Africa) – some of which are

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<sup>619</sup> Richard Baxley has argued forcefully how M. Gaddafi played-up tribal sentiments to rule Libya but in the event of the Arab Spring, the different tribes that were marginalized became the first to defect to the rebels. See “Shifting Loyalties: Libya’s Dynamic Tribalism,” *Harvard International Review*, Vol. 33, 2 (2011).

not just ridiculous but borders on insanity. Political office instead of being considered an opportunity *to serve* is rather an opportunity “to grab” a portion of the “national cake” for oneself and for one’s tribe. In this irrational mindset, a looting spree ensues with no vision as to the future of the commonwealth or the common good.<sup>620</sup>

A typical example is the present situation in the North where masses of young people, who were deliberately left uneducated by a succession of their leaders, are massively unemployed, and have now become hordes of beggars. But their “big brothers” were the leaders of yesterday<sup>621</sup> who instead of investing the resources of state to develop the North, looted them and are still *sitting on their loot and living like princes* in the midst of harrowing want and misery. The political elites of the North would prefer to provide periodic “hand-outs” to their beggarly brothers than create opportunities for them to become self-reliant and independent. The destitution of these jobless youths ensures and perpetuates their dependency which is further exploited at will by the same elites for political and religious purposes.

Therefore, it could be argued that tribalism, which is very strong in the North (among the Hausa Bakwai or Fulani) has been faithfully promoted and exploited for political purposes by the Northern elites (and/or oligarchies). And *religious fanaticism* in the North is primarily a politically motivated strategy that exploits native “tribalism” at the level of religion. The only difference is that “kinship” is more narrowly defined to exclude non Moslems. The constant mayhem and horror we experience now in the North unleashed on Christians is the brainchild of

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<sup>620</sup> See Geoffrey Mwakikegile, *Ethnic Politics in Kenya and Nigeria* (Huntington, N.Y: Nova Science Publisher, 2001), p. x; Rotimi Suberu, argues for true federalism as holding the key to Peace, See *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute for Peace, 2001).

<sup>621</sup> The North ruled Nigeria (often by force of arms) for 39 years out of 50 years since independence!

similar violence unleashed on non-Northerners for political reasons in the past. It is the *seed of acute tribalism*. There is therefore a unique variation of tribalism practiced in the North. It is a political tool for grabbing and maintaining power by the political elite. It retains a stranglehold on power by a callous calculus of disempowering hordes of poor and unthinking masses of people. It is not an accident that the greatest fear of Northern oligarchy is the enlightenment of the masses of its people. So, it discouraged formal education, but encouraged religious education that brainwashes any vestige of the capacity for critical thinking these folks might have. This ensures their ultimate submission as the “will of Allah!”

How can a coherent notion of nationhood be articulated in a situation where most are after a narrow self-interest? Is it possible to build a strong and vibrant nation with a bunch of tribes all seeking how to out-smart the other in getting a slash at the national cake? At best it will be a marriage of convenience that is forever perching at the edge of disintegration. The little gains of *tribal solidarity* are not sufficient to build a viable commonwealth. One needs to give way to the other.

It is pertinent to stress that tribalism, as a socialized behavior, is realized only through a deformation of conscience. Conscience, we have maintained, is the natural mechanism for self-transcendence or the internal mechanism for moral sanctions. But its formation depends on the external structures (family, community). Here we see the power of the *primary group* in the formation of conscience. If a child grows up experiencing discriminatory behavior or prejudice towards those of other tribes (or by extension, religion), its conscience becomes *deformed* by reason of a distortion not just in its principles of judgment but often in the reasoning process itself. The reason being that there is firstly, a distortion of reality itself, which then supports a

distortion of primary principles of reason (or logic): “Those outside my tribe are not ‘one of us’ and those ‘not one of us’ are *not to be trusted*; Mr X is not one of us. Therefore, Mr X is not to be trusted.” The same delusion and distortion repeats itself at the level of religion: “Those not members of my religion are ‘not one of us,’ and those that are ‘not one of us’ have *no intrinsic right* to live; Mr X is not a moslem. Therefore it is *right* to ‘eliminate’ Mr X. The first premise is loaded with all forms of misinformation that results in a socialized narrowing of the mind to see and judge others differently.<sup>622</sup> It is here precisely that ‘conscience’ is primarily deformed by mis-education which eventually learns to reason in a distorted manner unless a *reverse socialization* (re-education) occurs.

What are the solutions to eradicating this socio-moral virus? It is evident from the foregoing that it is possible to *reverse* the form of reasoning associated with tribalism only by a proper formation of conscience that happens *if and only if* there is proper re-education or socialization aimed at not “seeing others differently” but as a “WE”. Others are my other-SELVES and without whom I cannot possibly arrive at my fullest potentials. So, the first solution is reformation of conscience through the same socialization process that formed it. But the form of education we advocate is not just one that is left to merely the free choice of willing members but rather one that is realized through a *legislative mandate*. It is to be *taught mandatorily* in all schools. For this to happen especially in the North, a massive grass-root conscientization drive is required.

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<sup>622</sup> We consider the foregoing as the aboriginal roots of all conflict we see in Nigeria that provide the psycho-moral background for other viewing, interpreting, and responding to other social, political, and religious experiences.

The second solution is a stronger legislation against discrimination with a constituted body to ensure its implementation across the nation. Gordon Allport considers legislation as one of the remedies to discrimination not only because it prevents people from acting out their prejudice, but that in the long run, it also affects mental attitudes.<sup>623</sup> Legislating against racism in all its forms was and still remains the most effective tool in combating it as evidence shows in the U.S.A. and South Africa. It is surprising that there is hardly any outstanding legislation against tribalism in Nigeria.<sup>624</sup> Ironically, Nigerians fought as a nation against racism (apartheid) in South Africa, and Nigerians in diaspora today fight against “racist sentiments” in the United States, Britain, or anywhere they find themselves around the developed world. But they are silent with regard to tribalism at home. Why? This ‘silence’ is part of the problem. It indicates we live in denial of this monstrous “elephant in the room.’

We therefore recommend *national dialogue on tribalism* as the third solution. This brings this monster out of our mental closet (our subconscious) to national consciousness. Through open national dialogue we expose its ills, arrest the canonizing of tribalistic practices, and perhaps gradually develop a real national consciousness that so far is virtually nonexistent. Even more pertinent is the fact that this dialogue will trigger conscience reformation at a national level (a re-socialization process) because it helps open-minded members of the different tribes to have a rethink of their primary assumptions that everything about “my tribe” is sacrosanct. It forces us to reevaluate the possible “gains” of tribalism against that of a de-tribalized nation where everyone counts, and resources are used to develop every part of the country. The National

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<sup>623</sup> Gordon Allport, *Op. Cit.*, p. 477.

<sup>624</sup> There is a legislation against discrimination



Youth Service Corp (NYSC) was a laudable project aimed at national integration but because it was erected on a creaky foundation, it could not achieve its objective. Many Southerners now no longer want to be sent to the North for fear of their lives. A dialogue directed at the ills of tribalism, taught in schools, and punished by law, will transform ethnic consciousness to a national one if we commit to it. So, unless we are ready to consciously take the risk of building a viable nation that we will be proud of (it will most probably experience setbacks) we will remain in our tribal cocoons, afraid of each other, demonize or cannibalize each other, and incessantly compete for the “national cake” till we self-destruct and/or disintegrate. This paper does not have the luxury of arguing for a rationale for staying as one nation.<sup>625</sup>

The foregoing analysis of deep-rooted tribalism questions the claims of “communalism” in Nigeria (and Africa) as a “way of life” given that it does not seem to go skin deep to accommodate other tribes. This superficiality is revealed firstly in relationships with other tribes and subsequently with regard to one’s own kin – where greed proves to take no hostages as we shall see in our analysis of corruption.<sup>626</sup> In Chapter five we will explore more on “solutions,”

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<sup>625</sup> Adedapo Adeniran has argued forcefully in his book *Nigeria* for a “peaceful and friendly dissolution”. While we respect his salient reasons, we however prefer the bigger picture that sees ‘strength in numbers’. America’s strength is not just in the diversity of its demography but in its numbers as well. If Nigeria fails as a Nation, it is not only the failure of a nation but of a race. If a nation with an unprecedented array of bright minds like Nigeria cannot mobilize the intellectual and political resources to build and sustain the largest black nation in the world, then, it is the final proof that the black man cannot lead himself. The global consequences of a failed Nigeria are too dire to be contemplated simplistically or allowed to happen. See A. Adeniran Esquire, *Nigeria: The Case for Peaceful and Friendly Dissolution*, *Op. Cit.*

<sup>626</sup> The depth of this superficiality is even more pronounced if we are to consider the degree to which people victimize their own kin through real or imagined *witchcraft* or *sorcery*, a dimension that runs so deep that the fear (phobia) it generates constitutes a dimension of pathology that has eroded the psyche of an average Nigerian (African) perhaps like no other phenomenon does. See for example, Misty L. Bastian, “Vulture men, campus cultists and teenage witches: Modern magic in Nigerian popular media,” in *Magical Interpretations, Material Realities: Modernity, Witchcraft and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*, edited by Henrietta L. Moore and Todd Sanders (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 71-96. Paradoxically, this phobia has increased exponentially with the advent of Evangelical Christianity (*Pentecostalism*) that evolved a culture of feeding the people on this fear as a membership

but let us now examine how a strain of tribalism as an international pathology is localized by the phenomenon of globalization.

### **3.8.0 CONSCIENCE AND THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY**

This last segment of this chapter finds a link not just between globalization and conscience formation, but even more important is how it links tribalism and globalization to underscore its impact in conscience deformation. This conclusion is deducible from the foregoing segments. We have established that there is an integral connection between conscience formation and the moral community. If we concede to the symbiotic relationship of all things, or at least minimally admit of the interconnectivity between the global and local community, as globalization indicates, then, it becomes reasonable (if not self-evident) to argue that the global impacts the local (and vice versa, but not to the same degree) analogous to how the community impacts the individual, and the individual impacts the community. We intend to show there is an interpenetration of the global in the local such that not only is a virtual community discernible but that its “transformative powers” have significant consequences (good and bad) for moral formation that is often underestimated.<sup>627</sup> Given the elusive nature of the concept of globalization and the wide spectrum it covers, we need to delineate the aspect of it that concerns this study.

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strategy. This phenomenon will be examined in post-doctoral research on the theme: “*Religious fanaticism in Nigeria: Its Moral, Political, and Economic Origins.*”

<sup>627</sup> Manfred B. Steger asserts, “Indeed, the transformative powers of globalization reach deeply into the economic, political, cultural, technological, and ecological dimensions of contemporary social life.” See *Globalization: A Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), preface.

### 3.8.1 Defining Globalization

Globalization is a social phenomenon with economic, political, environmental, religious, cultural, and ideological dimensions. It therefore necessarily “extends beyond any particular academic discipline,” and as such provides great opportunity for inter-disciplinary conceptualization of this complex phenomenon.<sup>628</sup> However, this extensiveness does pose a clarity problem. Manfred Steger rightly observes that “globalization” has been applied in describing “a process, a condition, a system, a force, and an age” as “competing labels” that when conflated (for instance, conflating “process” and “condition”) obscure rather than clarify its meaning.<sup>629</sup> In an attempt to differentiate, he suggests “*globality*” as a term that signifies a “*social condition*” and “globalization” as signifying “*social processes*.”<sup>630</sup> For him, “globality” is not a static condition but a future oriented *social condition* “characterized by tight economic, political, cultural, and environmental interconnections and flows that make most of the currently existing borders and boundaries irrelevant.”<sup>631</sup> As such it is liable to evolve into something else (like “planetary” that expresses a condition of “colonization of our solar system”), making it rather “indeterminate”.<sup>632</sup> He imagines different value specifications driven by either an individualistic or communal and/or cooperative norms as possible social manifestations of globality. On the other hand, the concept of “globalization” refers to “*a set of processes* that appear to transform our present social condition of weakening nationality into one of

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<sup>628</sup> M. B. Steger, *Ibid*

<sup>629</sup> Steger, *ibid.*, p. 8

<sup>630</sup> Steger, *ibid.*, p. 8-9

<sup>631</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8

<sup>632</sup> Steger, *Ibid.* pp. 8-9

globality.”<sup>633</sup> He considers the “shifting forms of human contact” at the core of globalization such that an affirmation of globalization necessarily implies denationalization, a movement towards “postmodern globality,” and basically futuristic.<sup>634</sup> We assume that it is the “social process” that brings about the “social condition.” The former is on-going and while it determines the later, both are ever evolving and therefore fluid and/or non-static.

He suggests a definition of globalization as, “*the expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-time and world-space.*”<sup>635</sup> He distilled four elements from other definitions of globalization: firstly, it involves creating of new and multiplication of the existing social networks and activities. He then uses the idea of “*global imaginary*” to refer to the growing awareness that we all belong to a global community. He thinks that as this grows, it weakens the local and national imaginary and as such “destabilizes and unsettles the conventional parameters within which people imagine their communal existence.”<sup>636</sup>

What we affirm from Steger above is the dynamic nature of the concept of globalization. It is intrinsically a “process” and therefore an evolving phenomenon. We have no problem adopting his definition for functional reasons (“the expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-time and world-space”). We also acknowledge as helpful the insight in the distinction he makes between *globality* and *globalization as social*

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<sup>633</sup> Steger, *Ibid.* p. 9

<sup>634</sup> He argues that globalization implies three assertions: first, a gradual abandonment of modern nationality, second, a gradual movement towards the new condition of post-modern globality; third, we are not there yet. See Steger, *Globalization*, p. 9.

<sup>635</sup> Steger, p. 15.

<sup>636</sup> Steger, p. 10.

*condition* and *process* respectively. However, the critical point he makes is how globalization, as a process of intense social relations, is transforming our consciousness such that “national imaginary” is being displaced by a global one as people gradually realize we belong together to a “global community.” This transmutation of national to “global imaginary” maybe gradual but have the potential to transform how we view ourselves. There are two aspects: A perception of the world skewed *in favor of defined private interests of a few* and a more inclusive view - one that sees the bigger picture of an emerging global community and works towards a more egalitarian society. Globalization is being shaped today by these opposing forces with interlocking interests.<sup>637</sup>

Our concern here is not so much how globalization unfolds as it is about stressing the significance of “tribal interests” in shaping that process. Specifically we identify these *international “tribes”*<sup>638</sup> as the multi-national corporations whose interests the political powers in the developed world (in Europe and North America) often work hard to protect through local and international legislation and specific foreign policy agenda.<sup>639</sup> The political and economic forces that have consistently tried to shape world events in order to protect their “strategic

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<sup>637</sup> Some literatures on the part of those who prefer a more egalitarian society in a globalized world include: Jean Houston who argues that there is an ongoing “repartnering” of the self that results in a shift towards a new way of being community (“epigenesis of society”) in a global society. See *Kosmos*, fall, 2009:10; J. B. Quilligan makes a case for “global common goods,” and Mark Gerzon argues for “global citizenship,” Walter J. Hickel points to the “rise of the commons,” and R.D. Hames argues for a shift from the industrial to the “Gaian Paradigm”. See *Kosmos*, Fall, 2009: 5+

<sup>638</sup> We use the term “tribe” for these international players for functional reasons alone. They represent how similar “interests” bond people towards a common agenda. Such common interests link multinational companies and their home governments to pursue a relatively common policy agenda aimed towards common economic goal.

<sup>639</sup> There are too many resources on this topic. See for instance, Ankie Hoogvelt, *Globalization and the PostColonial World: The New Political Economy of Development* (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 46, 89, 144-162, 173-195; Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 134-274; Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1982), pp. 95-113, 205-280

interests” see globalization as a potential tool for achieving their primary goals which remains unchanging: maximizing economic and political dividends.

The *special interests* that drive cooperate agenda of multinational companies and foreign policies of governments is as pathological as the tribal interests of different ethnic groups in relation to the common good of a given nation (like discussed above). If this agenda is solely driven by profit and at the detriment of the opposing party in the relationship, then the *underlying drive is pathological*. The reason is simple: their interests blind them to the harm they cause not just to the “other” party but to themselves (in the long run) analogous to what we’ve seen in our analysis of tribalism above. They only see the other party as “wholly other” (an “out-group”) and very different from themselves. Blood kinship is displaced by “interest” kinship (profit). All tribalism is about preserving native interests. Therefore, a person who belongs to an “international tribe” has the same basic psycho-moral orientation as the local bigot. Both are blinded by self-interests. The only difference is location. The former has a wider extension of influence (international); the latter is a local player.

We therefore consider any form of orientation to international relations that is based *solely on profits and at the detriment of the opposing party* as a distinct form of tribalism – “international tribalism.” Given that it is about identifying and preserving native interests at all costs, it finds “kindred spirits” (those who share similar interests) in every nation and locality. It can easily corrupt weak local leadership to act against the interests of their people for personal gain (in form of economic or political interests). This explains why it plays a big role in establishing and reinforcing corruption in any given nation or local community. The “lobby group” has emerged in developed nations as a *non-coercive* but an effective form of power

employed by the emergent “international tribes” to achieve its political goals at both the local and global arena. The political goal is always an important step towards the real goal of economic profit. There is therefore a significant shift in how local governments get involved in the interests of multinational companies. Realizing that the degree to which they exercise political influence at home would be the degree they would be able to make that home government to work for it abroad, they therefore established powerful lobbies that recruit *virtual membership* into the “tribe” of the political class by making them have “vested interests” in the “interests” of the tribe (the Cooperate group). Such “interests” often overrides national interests. There is a growing membership of this *virtual tribe* among the political class such that a significant power shift from the people to the “tribe” is becoming discernible.

The extension of native interests across national borders describes in part the pathology we call *international tribalism*. Given that globalization enhances the interpenetration of the global in the local (what we call “glocalization”) it is expected that *international tribalism* as a socio-moral phenomenon may become more acute in the years ahead. Developing nations may find itself enveloped by a new form of colonialism: for instance there is already a new stampede for African lands. We should expect to see more and more big and powerful *international tribal interest* groups exploring the loopholes (or lobby to create one) in the local legislations around the world to promote or preserve their interests. While the developing nations are particularly vulnerable to this emerging tribe, developed nations are far from immune from its fangs either. For instance, United States is already feeling the heat of the enormous power of *lobby groups* in influencing government policy and cultural patterns of this great model of democracy. They,

along with other developed nations, already find it hard to track and tax the earnings of multinationals.

All *tribalism* (local or international) like all forms of selfishness, has a way it gets round to hurting itself. It is not that there is no healthy “self-interest.” What makes tribalism *unhealthy* or *pathological* as such is *the good it denies and/or the bad it promotes in order to further its ends*. At the local level, tribalism is blinded by prejudice to the merits of others outside the tribe, and does not hesitate to cause harm to them by denial of benefits or services. At the international level, it is blinded by desire for profit to see the harm it causes the local people or the good it could create among them. It is blind to the harm it causes the common good or the global community (including itself) in the long run. This is where the foregoing links to the formation of conscience – the human capacity to self-transcend or overcome self-destructive interests.

### **3.8.2 Local and Global Moral Pathologies: Toxic Moral Atmosphere and Conscience**

The relationship between local and international tribalism is that both represent socio-moral pathology that emit toxic moral atmosphere at the local and global arena. A toxic moral atmosphere impact moral formation at all levels. At the local level, tribalism hinders the proper moral formation (conscience formation) of individual members of the tribe because they stress difference with others at the detriment of similarity. Stressing how others are different from us establishes a deep sense of distrust and makes it impossible to build deep and lasting loving relationships across ethnic lines. People cannot make sacrifices for one another for when there is no trust, there is no love. This is the seedbed for political instability in Nigeria with all its attendant ills. We established earlier how this feeds on, and reinforces corrupt practices. When a given community praises their “son” who stole millions/billions from the common purse simply



because he is “one of us,” it distorts the moral compass of the community and results in a malformation of conscience especially of its younger generation.

On the other hand, “international tribalism” hinders proper moral formation at deeper levels than it has hitherto been given credit for. It injects a toxic moral atmosphere into the local space in different ways. For instance, when multinational oil companies collude with local political leadership to ignore establishing a benchmark for developing the local community but instead are indifferent to the environmental hazards resulting from oil drilling, spillage, among others, they create not only hardship, hunger and disease, but deep discontent and animosity among the people. Such discontent and animosity could deepen in a globalizing world where information of what obtains in other parts of the world is accessible to the local people. Globalization enables the local community a quick and easy access to information, and when they realize in quick time the degree to which they have been cheated and/or looted, they are not expected to be happy campers, nor should they.

Moreover, when the “international financial institutions (often beholden to the “tribes”) impose conditions like SAP (Structural Adjustment Programs)<sup>640</sup> that create more hardship on the already suffering masses of ordinary people while allowing billions of dollars in looted funds from the same country to be banked abroad, they exacerbate the poor economic conditions in the

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<sup>640</sup> The IMF and World Bank imposed austerity measures called “SAP” on Nigeria in 1986, during President I.B. Babangida regime (1985-1993) where billions of dollars were looted out of the country (12.4 billion dollars of oil windfall remains unaccounted for as the report of the “Okigbo Panel of Inquiry” got missing. By the time Obasanjo’s regime (1999-2007) negotiated settling our debtors in 2005, the facts were mind boggling as captured by a newspaper editorial recently: “Whereas all that we borrowed and for which we had repaid over \$40 billion while still owing \$35 billion by 2004, was less than \$18 billion; now we owe \$6.2 billion that will, according to DMO, rise to \$9.02 billion by year end and \$16.76 billion by 2015.” Is this believable by any logic? But these are realities some “developing nations” go through. See Punch editorial, “Onkonjo-Iwuala and the New Debt Trap,” *Punch*, Jan 28, 2013, <http://www.punchng.com/editorial/okonjo-iweala-and-the-new-debt-trap/>

local space. Capital flight increases joblessness and worsens the economic hardship of the people that itself creates ripples of negative effects, that includes, but not limited to, inspiring young people to seek abnormal or unhealthy pathways to survival. The toxicity of the moral atmosphere would make such criminal pathways not only an enticing option but could be interpreted especially in the minds of younger generation (who are more prone to peer pressure from across the global web) as “justified.”

It can be argued that 419<sup>641</sup> and related internet-linked criminal activities came into force in Nigeria during the SAP years of Babangida’s regime, a regime that is also known to have legalized corruption in Nigeria. This form of making money from unsuspecting local and international victims exploded at a time when successive leaderships were looting the country’s treasury without anybody ever holding them accountable; rather, those who were benefiting from such corrupt governments sing their praises in public (they give them local and national titles) while youths graduate from the University and roam around jobless. Might is then seen as right. If a society (local and international) develops a habit of praising and rewarding those who do wrong instead of punishing them, it arrests the inherent capacities for forming consciences in its moral system and a culture of irresponsibility is born.

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<sup>641</sup> “419” refers to a variation of “advance fee fraud” mail scam that has been traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the “Spanish prisoner” incidence. See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advance-fee\\_fraud](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advance-fee_fraud) Coincidentally, it has been made popular as “419” in the modern times due to its Nigerian variation of it. It is an ironic humor that “419” actually is the section of the Nigerian Criminal Code that deals with “obtaining property by false pretences” See Nigerian Law, Part 6, Division 1, Chapter 34, section 419. It reads: “Any person who by any false pretence, and with intent to defraud, obtains from any other person anything capable of being stolen, or induces any other person to deliver to any person anything capable of being stolen, is guilty of a felony, and is liable to imprisonment for three years.” <http://www.nigeria-law.org/Criminal%20Code%20Act-Part%20VI%20%20to%20the%20end.htm>

Moreover, if we consider again that we are “responders” to action done to us (chapter one) we see that irresponsibility begets irresponsibility. This is not just true at the local level, but even more so at the global level. The distance that used to be a factor in the principle underlying the idiom: “the chickens have come home to roost” is virtually overcome by globalization. Therefore, at no time in the history of humanity does the flipside of the golden rule have greater implication: “do *not do unto others what you will not want done to yourself.*” Globalization enables both the affirmation and contravention of this principle to a degree that is unprecedented.

We are witnessing the rise of “fringe” groups: characterized by the use of their talent/resource base to fight causes they believe in: “Activists,” “Terrorists,” “Wikileaks” “Hackers Anonymous,” to name only a few, are merely harbingers of the future of protests. Technology has not only enabled us to see how we are connected, but ensures we impact each other accordingly. It is perhaps only a matter of time for the emergence of a more sophisticated fringe “experts international” who are either benevolent creatures (those having lost their national allegiance to the “global imaginary” fight to defend the global commons from the “tribe of vampires”) or carnivores, an “elite killer squad” sent by their paymasters to draw the last pint of blood from the hapless masses already comatose at their knees. Edward Snowden is perhaps an example of this mold of fringe “experts”. There are probably more waiting in the ranks. Time will tell wither the pendulum swings. But the confrontation seems oddly inevitable.<sup>642</sup> But we

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<sup>642</sup> Snowden recently chose SXSW for his first virtual appearance because he is already a hero among new generation technophiles. A Forbes report on that event shows they think the security situation is a “call to arms” for these technophiles. They have been “radicalized” by these conscienceless data mining and they think now that NSA is part of the threat model they have to fight. We are “responders” to what is done to us. See, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kashmirhill/2014/03/09/why-edward-snowden-chose-sxsw-for-his-first-live-video-appearance/>

affirm that the hope of humanity lies with a rediscovery of the milk of human kindness in our relations. We insist that this is only possible if we find ways of retrieving conscience formation.

## CONCLUSION

We therefore conclude that if the international community recognize the symbiotic nature of human relationships, admit that what happens in Africa affects all nations in the very long run (regardless of how long this takes effect) then governments will reconsider its policies towards third world nations (particularly Africa). This research is not about the details of the complicity of the “developed world” in the fate of Nigeria (and Africa by implication), for good or bad.<sup>643</sup> Rather, we prefer to argue that when “strategic self-interest” is the sole criteria for policies of engagement with the world outside of one’s nation (be it governments or multinational companies), then the “global community” loses its moral anchor or “moral voice” analogous to the local community that loses its moral voice for the same reasons (selfishness). As with the local community where individuals develop malformed consciences, the global community that loses its moral voice helps form nations of “terrorists,” “scammers,” “hackers,” and “rabid shooters” that are fast changing the way we live.

Considering the costs in talents and treasure (trillions of dollars, thousands of lives lost) of war alone, one wonders if these “reactionary wars” could not have been proactively prevented by a more robust and beneficent approach to foreign relations agenda by those nations that shape world events. The spike in these fringe elements shaping both national discourse and global

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<sup>643</sup> See instead, Ankie Hoogvelt, *Globalization and the Post-Colonial World: The New Political Economy of Development* (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 46, 89, 144-162, 173-195; Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 134-274; Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1982), pp. 95-113, 205-280.

lifestyles puts a question mark not just on individual nations where they originate but more importantly perhaps on the principles that shapes foreign policy agenda of the international community and/or nations that have influenced their socio-political and economic life overtime.

We therefore call for a paradigm shift in the underlying principles guiding foreign policies of these nations (all nations that are classified as “developed world”). The signs indicate the trajectory of human history is about to experience a monumental shift. Moreover, the shifting nature of international crime reveals reciprocity of good and bad within the global community.<sup>644</sup> Socio-economic data support this argument and current trends suggest a search for a new paradigm of global engagement.<sup>645</sup> Though we assign the principal task of internal “moral reform” to Nigerians themselves we also identify how past and current policies, actions/inactions of the international community could trigger, galvanize, and sustain the momentum of that internal effort at reform or obstruct and/or slow it down.

We call for a *paradigm shift* in the policy of engagement between the local and international community that takes seriously not just the reciprocity enabled by globalization, but more importantly recognizing that the benefits inherent in a robust, proactive, and beneficent approach to foreign relations far outweighs its demerits in the long run. Such attention sees the

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<sup>644</sup> We note particularly the “mail scam” that began as a Nigerian “419” mutation, but has become a global nightmare; the new “piracy” that is becoming an international puzzle; the new face of terrorism and multi-victim aggression are all home-grown “bad conducts” that have now found international markets. Moreover, it is not particularly smart for any nation to assume they can “throw money at crime” and stop it. International scam at least has proved not only difficult to stop but frustratingly costly. If a nation spends more money fighting scammers than what is scammed, then the loss is near double. Promoting internal sanctions is always a better and smarter alternative to legislative approach and its implementation.

<sup>645</sup> Jean Houston argues that there is an ongoing “re patterning” of the self that results in a shift towards a new way of being community (“epigenesis of society”) in a global society. See *Kosmos*, Fall, 2009:10; J. B. Quilligan makes a case for “global common goods,” Mark Gerzon argues for “global citizenship,” Walter J. Hickel points to the “rise of the commons,” and R.D. Hames argues for a shift from the industrial to the “Gaian Paradigm”. See *Kosmos*, Fall, 2009: 5+

wisdom inherent in a truly reformed and prosperous Nigeria (Africa), and adopts morally sound foreign policies rather than ones based merely on *strategic self-interests that often could promote suffering in countries with inadequate regulatory systems that could defend the rights of the poor and the vulnerable. When powerful external forces prey upon vulnerable countries and communities consistently, disaffection is entrenched, and eventually becomes the seedbed for persistent national crisis in those countries and results in future global nightmares.* The same approach holds the key to winning the war against terrorism<sup>646</sup> or overcoming the horde of “scammers” that now throttle the globe for it addresses the root causes rather than the symptoms.

A paradigm shift in the primary principles that define foreign policy agenda that we advocate is made possible when each nation opens itself to the “global heart”<sup>647</sup> from where the milk of human compassion flows. Anodea Judith explains: “*Each of our hearts is a cell in the global heart, giving and receiving love. Each time we create an act of love, we inspire others to do the same.*”<sup>648</sup> This also implies that each time we create an act that negatively impacts others we sow a seed of hate that is harvested and recycled in time. Since every moral act has its consequences in history (good or bad effects), it is only proper to act in such a way that we “co-

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<sup>646</sup> Anodea Judith argues for shift from “a love of power to the power of love” as the answer to all forms of violence in the new age of human development. She says, “Peace is a creative process of actively joining *I* and *thou* into a co-creative *we*. It requires authentic communication, empathic listening, and wildly creative solutions.” She cites the deep incite from K. Clotey and A. Ababio-Clotey: “*The holiest place on Earth is where an ancient hatred has become a present love.*” See *Waking the Global Heart*, p. 294-295

<sup>647</sup> Anodea Judith writes extensively on what this implies in *Waking the Global Heart: Humanity’s Rite of Passage from the Love of Power to the Power of Love* (Santa Rosa, CA: Elite Books, 2006), particularly pp. 287-328.

<sup>648</sup> Anodea, *ibid*, p. 288 (and the stress is ours).

create” rather than destroy. The attitude that allows us to do this is compassion, the power to “feel with another,” or “to feel another’s suffering.”<sup>649</sup>

This attitude is not limited to human relations but relations to all life. Think of the impact of this attitude when oil companies in places like Nigeria have an inviolable policy of ensuring the wellbeing of the local community as a priority in all their dealings. This will not only ensure that the eco-system is preserved or renewed (where destroyed) but would raise the standard of living of these vulnerable and suffering people and in the long run, create an affection of friendship rather than discontent. In this way, they help in the formation of consciences in the people in these communities because moral responsibility begets moral responsibility and vice versa. The Dalai Lama observes that when compassion characterize our actions and we are devoted to the welfare of others we let loose a “power and potential for good” not otherwise possible and opens the doors of friendship with “all sentient beings”<sup>650</sup> We will end this chapter with the words of Pope John Paul II who sees this “friendship” born of compassion as “solidarity” that is the gateway to peace and development:

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<sup>649</sup> *Ibid*, p. 291

<sup>650</sup> Dalai Lama, *How to Expand Love*, translated and edited by Jeffrey Hopkins (New York: Atria, 2005), p. 134, cited by Anodea Judith, *Waking the Global Heart*, *ibid*. p. 291. We add that America is leading the world in the war on terror. It is fast changing American lifestyle and much of the rest of the world. The answer lies not in military might but in redefining how America relates to the world. This provides it with an opportunity to open its heart for the world to fall in love with this great country again as it once did before “militarism” hijacked its foreign policy agenda. And behind this militarism are the “tribes” (mentioned above) whose self-interests could drive America to the precipice. For instance, if you listen to the on-going gun-control debate you find a sinister mentality that seems to prefer that over 11,000.00 Americans die (2011) in the relative “safety” of American homes and streets than stop the flow of guns (or profit) using second amendment as cover. If that ridiculous number of unwarranted death does not raise a “terror alarm” for America, one wonders what ever will since America is by all standards self-destructing. They are dying in their thousands in their own homes in a single year more than the combined deaths attributed to terrorism and the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan. This is astoundingly ridiculous! But nothing explains better the power of the new tribe. If this could happen to America, consider the fate of poor countries that are infinitely defenseless against this kind of cabal. A stitch in time saves nine. America needs to look inwards or it would definitely self-destructs, albeit gradually.

The solidarity which we propose is the *path to peace and at the same time development*. For world peace is unconceivable unless the world's leaders come to recognize that *interdependence* in itself demands the abandonment of the politics of blocs, the sacrifice of all forms of economic, military, or political imperialism, and the transformation of mutual distrust into *collaboration*. This is precisely the *act proper* to solidarity among individuals and nations.<sup>651</sup>

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<sup>651</sup> John Paul II, "Sollicitudo Rei Socialis" [On Social Concern], in *Catholic Social Thought*, p. 423. The stresses are his.



## 4.0 CHAPTER FOUR: CONSCIENCE AND SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION

### 4.0.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

In the foregoing chapters we have tried to show that conscience formation is at the root of moral responsibility because it functions not merely as a natural mechanism for internal sanctions but also provides the individual with the capacity to transcend debilitating self-interest that remains the albatross for moral responsibility. It enables an individual to develop a moral sensibility for the wellbeing of the whole community as against a fixation on narrow self-interests. This moral consciousness to seek the good of the whole than the few is developed through socialization process that starts in the primary community (family, village or local community) as the child/individual listens to the voice of significant others (parents, caregivers, teachers, local religious and civil leaders). However, when the primary community fails to model for the child or individuals proper standards of behavior, conscience malformation occurs. We showed how tribalism is a psycho-moral pathology that distorts the process of moral formation at different levels in the Nigerian socio-moral space. As it encourages distrust of others outside the tribe, it pollutes the moral atmosphere that then creates disaffection across ethnic divides.

Analogously, globalization enables *international tribalism* (what we identify as a form of “institutionalized self-interest”) to create similar disaffection in the local communities by adopting the policy of “divide and conquer” to achieve selfish political and/or economic ends (maximizing profit at the detriment of the vulnerable local people). We argued for a paradigm shift in the primary principles guiding foreign relations from solely “strategic self-interest” to one of “compassionate engagement” between equals and for the sake of the global common good. Such mutual partnership takes seriously the symbiotic nature of all life and the reciprocal

efficacy of human acts. It therefore creates peace by first creating affection of friendship through due diligence in acting responsibly (or with high integrity) in all its relationships with other nations and peoples.

This chapter examines how the foregoing analysis provides the sufficient condition for systemic corruption to thrive (especially in Nigeria). While examining the nature and definition of corruption, differentiating “systemic” from “incidental” corruption provides some clarity to our theme. Ample illustrations of corrupt practices in Nigeria provide the lens through which we see more clearly the insights of the preceding chapters. It then becomes more lucid in this chapter how “institutionalized self-interest” (that we identified with “tribalism”)<sup>652</sup> is the oil that lubricates the wheels of systemic corruption locally (and globally) by destroying the foundations of moral formation through the distortion of basic process of forming consciences.

Though we present systemic corruption in Nigeria as essentially a *leadership disease* (enabled by a preponderance of leaders that are venal) but we also admit the complicity of the masses in its practice. However, we are able to show through our analysis of “sociality of sin” how the common people are properly “victims” of a corrupt system, generally speaking, than genuine “accomplices”. Nevertheless, though most are indirectly coerced into corrupt practices by a broken system, it may not constitute sufficient condition for lack of culpability at the individual levels of participation in corruption in many particular cases.

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<sup>652</sup> This research has put a stress on “tribalism” as a representative psycho-moral pathology that impacts “systemic corruption” significantly than any other. It is presented here as “institutionalized self-interest.” Illustration 3 describes how the wheel of corruption is driven in Nigeria: Tribalism - malformation of consciences - systemic corruption as a theoretical construct that encapsulates the essential elements of this research. Seeking the roots of other problems like “religious fanaticism” would perhaps replace “tribalism” with “illiteracy” or any other relevant primary pathology.

We reaffirmed our arguments in previous chapters that when socio-political forces manipulate or toy with the “standards” of behavior in order to achieve specific private ends at the detriment of the common good, they unleash forces they cannot readily control to the detriment of all. So, today’s evils are the results of yesterday’s misdeeds, irrespective of whether our assessment of the trajectory of history as moving in a spiral or linear progression.

We evaluated the recommendation of three theories of systemic corruption to show either their inadequacy or relevance for the Nigerian situation. We consider the “big-bang” and “targeted gradualism” as approaches that provide useful insights that could serve as possible recommendations for Nigeria at different historical contexts. While we consider the recent efforts at reform as credible platforms for present and future consolidation, we however doubt the possibility of sustaining them due to inherent lapses in the system since those to implement these reform initiatives are likely to compromise it since they are used to living on rent.

We therefore recommended a more holistic approach to systemic corruption that not only incorporates the salient recommendations of mainline theories but also goes further to address the root causes. We identified the primary pathology of Nigerian corruption as tribalism (as noted above). We highlighted its “kinship” to “international tribalism” that both sustain corrupt practices locally and globally. In the Nigerian situation, we underscored the dangers of praising immoral practices that kinship solidarity enables. We recommend safeguarding our traditional moral formation process but only through critical deconstruction because of inherent ambivalence that calls for a shift from compactness to differentiation.

#### 4.1. THE NOTION OF CORRUPTION

There are as many definitions of corruption as there are authors. In order not to be lost in the maze of definitions, we shall point out some of them and adopt a functional definition. In a recent work, Laura S. Underkuffler examines mainstream theories that define corruption based on their areas of emphases (those on law are definitions that stress it as an illegal act; duty, stresses it as a “breach of duty;” and relationship, stresses it as a “betrayal of trust and secrecy” or as “inequality”). This includes theories that either stress “public interest” or “economic considerations” and others that offer a combination of foregoing emphases. Her conclusion was that none of these definitions were adequate. She cites an example of “combination theory” as:

We recognize political corruption when a public official ‘A,’ in violation of the trust placed in him by the public ‘B,’ and in a manner which harms the *public interest*, knowingly engages in conduct which *exploits* the office for clear *personal* and *private gain* in a way which runs contrary to the *accepted rules and standards* for the conduct of public office within the political culture, so as to benefit a third party ‘C’, by providing C with access to a good or service ‘C’ would not otherwise obtain.<sup>653</sup>

According to Underkuffler, the above definition is made richer by virtue of its complex combination of elements most mainstream theories leave out. She argues that corruption is more than “illegality, breach of duty, betrayal, secrecy, inequality, the subversion of public interest, and inefficiency,”<sup>654</sup> irrespective of whether these elements are considered alone or together. The reason is that they fail to capture the “essence of corruption” – for according to her, “they are

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<sup>653</sup> Mark Philp, "Contextualizing Political Corruption," in Arnold J. Heidenheimer and Michael Johnston (eds.), *Political Corruption: Concepts & Contexts* (New Brunswick, 2002) (3rd edition), 41, 42 cited by Laura S. Underkuffler, "Defining Corruption: Implications for Action," in Robert I. Rotberg. *Corruption, Global Security, and World Order* (Kindle Locations 631-632). Kindle Edition.

<sup>654</sup> Underkuffler, *Ibid.* Kindle location 538

not, alone or in combination, all that compose the corrupt core.”<sup>655</sup> Therefore even the complex definition above is still inadequate. She argues that “corruption is an explicitly moral notion; corruption describes in general parlance, a powerful all-consuming evil.”<sup>656</sup> As a consequence, any attempt to understand this concept without due attention to its moral aspect “will be both descriptively and programmatically inadequate.”<sup>657</sup> She argues that corruption is not a term that is morally neutral but one that is at core a concept that expresses a transgression of a “universal norm” and therefore carries with it the added weight of offsetting the moral fabric of the larger society. It is like a “virus” or “cancer” that destroys its host either aggressively or gradually.

To underscore this moral “core” of corruption is the reason for this chapter. The inadequacy of mainstream definitions and theories of corruption that Underkuffler analyzed stem from a neglect of this moral core such that corruption is often placed at same level with any other social malady like poor healthcare delivery services. The reason could often be traced to a tendency among scholars to appear to be non-judgmental or morally neutral or indifferent to value-laden concept. A deeper reason perhaps is the need to retain its conceptualization within measurable limits. In other words, the need for statistical “data” could be driving a morally neutral conceptualization of corruption. The result is a *conceptual gap* in a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. But corruption is a “morality-loaded” concept and ought to be treated as such. It is precisely for this reason that we adopted an interdisciplinary approach that enables us

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<sup>655</sup> Underkuffler, *ibid.* Kindle location 541

<sup>656</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid*

an exploration of various backgrounds that could provide relevant insights as the data for our theological reflection on this problematic.

The tendency to bracket morality out of our conceptual understanding of corruption not only obscures its meaning but more importantly has a sedative effect on those engaged in it. And interestingly, corruption is a term with tentacles up to the ivory towers, such that even scholars have to confront it in their own work. For instance, when a scholar is paid a huge amount by an interest party to provide research that “favors” this client’s perspective irrespective of where the data points. That is “corruption” per excellence (the “corruption” of research data or of truth). This simple example indicates not just the wide reach of this concept (it is not limited to the behavior of public officials) but also points to its essence. It is a distortion of the moral order. However it achieves this distortion by first disabling the “gatekeepers” or the moral security apparatus of the rational intellect (*intellect* and *will*), at the core of which is *the conscience*. Bracketing morality out of a concept like corruption we effectively neutralize its power to evoke moral questions and the query of conscience. But such approach also disables the critical help towards an ultimate solution which we repose in *internal* rather than in *external* sanctions.

In view of the foregoing, we see the need to tighten the definition of corruption. J.S Nye’s definition of corruption is considered a classic: “behavior which deviates from formal duties of a public role (elective or appointive) because of private regarding (personal, close family, private clique) wealth or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private regarding influence.”<sup>658</sup> This definition supports moral neutrality even as it

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<sup>658</sup> J.S. Nye, “Corruption and Political Development: A Cost-Benefit Analysis,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 61, 1967, pp. 417-27 cited by Acha F. Ndubisi, *Nigeria: Hope or Hopelessness?* (Enugu: Cecta, 1991), p.46

admits it to be “deviant” behavior – when it “deviates from formal duties” of office. In this way, it not only limits corruption to “public office” but is silent if this is a *willful* act. The last segment: “violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private regarding influence” is rather vague as to what type of “rules” needs to be violated to qualify it as corruption. In communities where the unwritten “rule” is “do whatever is in your power to help your family, kin, or friends,” there will hardly be any act that would pass that test. We therefore propose the following definition that borrows slightly from Mark Philips above:

Corruption is an *act of moral disorder* whereby a human person *knowingly* and *willfully* abuses public trust and *harms public interests* by *acting deceitfully* and in a manner that *violates statutory standards of conducts* (for office, position, status) for the clear reason of private or personal gain (pecuniary or kind) or to favor a client (kin, friend, foe) in a manner inconsistent with *approved* and *objective* standards of moral conduct.<sup>659</sup>

While admitting that there is no perfect definition, we do think that the above is framed to underscore the moral “core” of corruption and place it properly where it belongs: a moral concept placed squarely within the individual’s moral judgment and conduct. It is therefore not just a “deviant” behavior, that is obscure, but one that is “morally disordered” based on the premise that it ruptures not merely the inner sanctums of individual character but also the very moral fabric of society itself. It recognizes that corruption is committed beyond the confines of “public office” (bribery is often given by those not “in office”). So the concept of “person” not only broadens its extensions beyond public office, but also affirms the primary dignity of the actor as a *sane, rational* and *willful* being – a moral agent (refer to Chapter One). Acting “deceitfully” is a word that is at the heart of the definition we propose because every act of corruption is intended to “deceive” those who have the right to know (often, the public). It is not

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<sup>659</sup> This is our formulation adapted from Mark Philips definition cited above.

just “approved rules” of a given community, but one that passes the scrutiny of others beyond that community – a more “objective” even if not “universal” code of moral conduct. In this way, “rules” of local communities could be tested by more universally accepted standards of behavior. We admit however that fighting a “system” of corruption will require targeting the system more than the individual, but since we are proposing a “holistic” as opposed to segmental approach, we insist on the significance of developing a culture of moral integrity by individuals within the system as the ultimate solution to corruption. Therefore our definition above retains the moral force necessary to trigger the judgments of conscience in a social system crafted to develop moral integrity in its members. It is clearly not morally neutral. It is not merely a matter of “legality” of the act, such that the agent seeks for ways to “out-smart” the law. It is an act that speaks about the “character” of the agent. It is about integrity. It speaks about “who” the agent is at his/her very core. The definition engages the agent internally before the considerations of external sanctions (criminal law) that is a penal remedy. In this way, both internal and external sanctions work towards the same goal. A morally neutral definition provides a buffer to the agent such that remedies are but bandages to the wound without the necessary medicinal properties. Let us now explore the notion of “systemic” corruption.

#### **4.2. The NATURE OF SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION**

The need to define systemic corruption is aimed at distinguishing it from “incidental,” “systematic” and/or “systemic” corruption.<sup>660</sup> Omar Azfar thinks that the term “incidental”

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<sup>660</sup> See S. J. Kpundeh, “Political Will in Fighting Corruption,” in *Corruption and Integrity: Improvement Initiatives in Development Countries*, UNDP, OECD, cited by Simplice Asongu, in “Fighting Corruption in Africa: Do Existing Corruption-control levels Matter?” <http://mpr.ub.uni-muenchen.de/41194/> MPRA paper no. 41194, posted 11. September 2012.



does not ‘denote rarity’ but that various aspect of corruption are not part of the same system” such that incidental corruption “could be either rare or widespread.”<sup>661</sup> Kpundeh and Asongu hold a contrary view. They consider “incidental” as denoting rarity of corruption. This later view is captured in Asongu’s distinctions between the three forms of corruption cited below:

Firstly, *incidental corruption* is characterized by petty bribery and involves opportunistic individuals or small groups. In this context corruption is the exception rather than the rule. High-level private sector actors and senior officials seldom border with such theft. Secondly, *Systematic corruption* is organized, not necessarily institutionalized or pervasive but recurrent. It usually involves large gains which are subject to popular scandals. While it is entrenched and functions with a large number of officials, intermediaries and entrepreneurs, this form of corruption originates from high-level civil servants that recognize and exploit the illegal ventures and opportunities in government departments and agencies. Hence, this practice is the direct violation of the rule of law. Thirdly, *Systemic corruption* is pervasive, institutionalized (perhaps accepted but not necessarily approved), and built into the economic and political institutions. It occurs and flourishes in situations where public sector wages fall below a living-wage. In contrast to systematic corruption, it involves all levels of employment.<sup>662</sup>

The above distinctions, which we endorse, provide more clarity for delineating “incidental” corruption from a more endemic form of the disease we identify as ‘systemic’ corruption. While we admit the coherence of the distinction between “systematic” from “systemic” corruption above, we however do not attach much significance to it in this study. Systematic corruption may be considered as a midpoint between *incidental* and *systemic* corruption. It is neither institutionalized nor a rare phenomenon; it is neither a pervasive nor a minor form of corruption.<sup>663</sup> It could therefore be subsumed or classified under “incidental” or ‘systemic’

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<sup>661</sup> See Omar Azfar, “Disrupting Incidental and Systemic Corruption” <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PSGLP/Resources/32Azfar.pdf>

<sup>662</sup> Simplice Asongu, “Fighting Corruption in Africa: Do Existing Corruption-control levels Matter?” <http://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/41194/> MPRA paper no. 41194, posted 11. September 2012. The emphases are ours.

<sup>663</sup> John Waterbury distinguishes between “endemic,” “planned,” and “developmental” corruption as relevant for his times but one that no longer provides sufficient clarity for understanding this phenomenon today. See J. Waterbury,

corruption depending on one's approach. For functional reasons, we prefer to retain the broader distinctions between *incidental* and *systemic* corruption. Omar Azfar describes systemic corruption as "analogous to organized crime" in these words:

Many countries in the world suffer from systemic corruption. This type of corruption is analogous to organized crime: participants act not independently but in concert with one another, maintaining the system that allows them to extract rents and taking their own share of the rents. Systems of corruption can involve the sale of jobs, the sharing of rents from bribery or theft, and the compromising of systems of integrity that could control corruption.<sup>664</sup>

*Systemic corruption* in this research therefore describes a situation where corruption has become endemic, pervasive and institutionalized, such that it is considered part of the "normal" functioning of the entire spectrum of socio-economic and political apparatus (or system). It is a form of "moral decay" so pervasive that it has become a "way of life" such that the "abnormal" becomes the norm. There are too many illustrations on systemic corruption as a global phenomenon often overseen by kleptocracies.<sup>665</sup> The difference is that it has a crippling effect on poorly run countries (especially those in the third world) than countries with a more robust and

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"Corruption, Political Stability, and Development: Comparative Evidence from Egypt and Morocco," *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 11, 426-45; August 1976.

<sup>664</sup> Omar Azfar, "Disrupting Incidental and Systemic Corruption," WB33\_PACC\_CH08.qxd 2/27/07, Page 251; <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PSGLP/Resources/32Azfar.pdf>

<sup>665</sup> Kelly Greenhill explains "kleptocracy as "government characterized by rampant greed and corruption' which privilege the personal wealth and political power of government officials and the ruling class at the expense of the population." See Greenhill, "Kleptocratic Interdependence: Trafficking, Corruption, and the Marriage of Politics and Illicit Profits," in *Corruption, Global Security, and World Order* edited by Robert I. Rotberg (Kindle Locations 1405), Kindle edition. Instances of kleptocracies: Alfredo Stroessner of Paraguay (1954-1989) turned the country into his personal fiefdom; Alberto Fujimori of Peru bought off the legislature, the army, police, the media to maintain power and collect rent; Francois and Jean Claude Duvalier of Haiti or Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire all turned their countries into personal companies and transferred public funds to their private pockets and that of their families and friends. In Nigeria it was the same for most military dictatorships particularly General I. B. Babangida and Abacha; the civilian Regimes from Obasanjo to the present are accused but they all seem to have taken an oath to "protect themselves" by protecting each successive government from substantive probe and prosecution.

sophisticated organs of government (like in the developed world). But even the later have to contend with organized crime that sometimes exercises tremendous influence regarding how government is run.<sup>666</sup> We are however more concerned here with the Nigerian situation.

In Nigeria, experience suggests that corrupt practices have corroded the system such that it becomes “abnormal” to have things done “normally”. For instance, getting a new passport or driving license (or renewing them) are routine services the average Nigerian would “expect” to pay “a fee” over-and-above whatever the official fee is to get this done. So, if you go to the immigration office to process a new passport and you actually get this done in “good time” without “settling” anybody (giving bribe) to facilitate it will be considered an “abnormal” and “exceptional” occurrence for the ordinary Nigerian. Mind you, it is not that you do not have the “right papers”. It is just that the “system” has evolved an *unwritten rule* that “mandates” you to “pay extra” for every service you receive from public servants. In a situation of systemic corruption, the standards rules of conduct for public office is discarded and replaced by the “unwritten rule” evolved into the system. This is why ‘systemic’ corruption is a pernicious virus difficult to eradicate. It has become a “way of life” and the abnormal is the new “normal.”

A classic study on corruption in Nigeria by Acha F. Ndubisi compared the Nigerian socio-political space to a “zoological garden” – a “Giant Zoo” where rationality seems to be in permanent stasis and responsible behavior is considered an aberration as captured by the numbing cliché, “This is Nigeria,” implying that the “corruption glut” that has overtaken the land is perhaps a unique “achievement” or a “lifestyle” that those who have to live in it must learn to

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<sup>666</sup> The Mafia for instance has been known to have deep reaches at certain times in the governments of the countries within which they operate (examples of American mafia, the Italian and Japanese Mafia, to mention a few). See Kelly Greenhill, *Op. Cit*, Kindle Location, 1426

adopt.<sup>667</sup> He does acknowledge that alongside this “zoo” exists the possibility for a healthier state of affairs he calls “paradise” inhabited by principled and responsible Nigerians (the “humans”). Nigeria will rise to its great potentials if leadership of the country is allowed to emerge from it. In other words, he lays the primary blame of this “oversupply of corruption”<sup>668</sup> to intellectually and morally deficient leadership, but also recognizes that the average Nigerian often share some of the blame by their complacency or failure to hold their leaders accountable and by direct participation in corruption. He uses Kohlberg’s model of moral development to argue that the leadership in the country is occupied by people within the pre-conventional stage of moral development, hence, act like animals – turning the country into a human zoo.<sup>669</sup>

Given the moral deficiency of leadership, it was easy to turn these “unprincipled” leaders into willing tools in the hands of neo-imperialist forces that often prefer the “zoo” arrangement for their selfish economic ends. So, the few principled ones did not last. He particularly mentioned General Murtala Mohammed (was Military Heads of State 1975-1976)<sup>670</sup> who was quickly eliminated by powerful forces in a *coup de tart* because his actions during the six months he was in power suggest he was ready to clean the Augean stable. His revolutionary ideas to rid Nigeria of corruption did not please the imperialist forces that seem to prefer maintaining the corrupt

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<sup>667</sup> See Acha F. Ndubisi, *Nigeria: Hope or Hopelessness? Op. Cit.* pp. 7 and 45

<sup>668</sup> *Ibid*, p. 45

<sup>669</sup> *Ibid*. pp. 20-33

<sup>670</sup> See Toyin Falola, *The History of Nigeria* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), pp. 137,164 <http://www.questia.com/read/27390109>; Tsuzom M. Ndakotsu, "Nigerian Names as Access Points," *African Research & Documentation*, no. 101 (2006), <http://www.questia.com/read/1P3-1334043081>

status quo. So they changed the government and installed a puppet that will protect their interests.<sup>671</sup>

The policy of installing and/or maintaining a corrupt government in power has done the greatest harm to evolving a credible and accountable governmental structure in the so called “developing world”. *Those who benefit from their vulnerability protect their underdevelopment.*

If the leadership is corrupt, there is little hope for overcoming systemic corruption. Now, it is evident that every leadership in Nigeria thrives on the patronage of our neo-colonial “godfathers” (directly or indirectly). For instance, Governor Orji Uzo Kalu, a presidential candidate, had to brazenly advertise his “connections” to the CIA and to United States Congress where he openly went to solicit for their “anointing” before his presidential ambition can gain traction. As if that was not enough, the White House demanded for his unconditional release when arrested by EFCC, an anti-corruption agency.<sup>672</sup> American Congressmen were present at his inauguration, and they even held a press conference describing him as the hope of Nigeria! Kalu made no secret of his questionable “connections” with foreign secret service or power. However, given that this is a person who could not account for gross irregularities in administering state accounts while in office, to be released on the pressure from “above,” you can imagine the *perception* that creates about United States in the imagination of the average Nigerian privy to this incident. These are ways those in power (in specific foreign countries) destroy the goodwill their people

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<sup>671</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 59-68

<sup>672</sup> See Bode Eluyera’s online commentary in <http://nigeriavillagesquare.com/articles/bode-eluyera/could-orji-kalu-be-a-cia-agent.html> posted on July 20, 2007

enjoy in other countries where they exercise influence.<sup>673</sup> If the political elite resort to boasting not of their real achievements but of their “connections” with foreign powers, it denotes not only a deep crisis of identity among them but a crisis of “integrity” for their foreign political godfathers or collaborators.<sup>674</sup> We shall provide examples in the next segment how foreign MNC (multinational corporations) play a major role in systemic corruption (at least in Nigeria).

However, this research places the onus of corruption squarely on the home front. We agree with Ndubisi that poor work ethic is at the roots of systemic corruption. It is obvious that it thrives more where morals are allowed to run low. Ndubisi captures this in his description of “endemic corruption” as an “abuse of office” in governmental and private institutions that cuts across the “police, customs, banks, courts, hospitals, various ministries and educational institutions”. He asserts that “Money is given to, or demanded by, public officials so that they will ignore the rules of conduct set up by government for public good.”<sup>675</sup> The police will take “egunje” (cliché for bribe) and allow a vehicle that is not “road-worthy” or “without proper papers” to operate; the custom will do the same to allow sub-standard goods or “contrabands”

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<sup>673</sup> The average Nigerian (and you might add most people in the third world) loves the United States and its people, and the same could be said of other western countries. The problem is when leaderships and entrepreneurs in these countries undermine this basic goodwill and destroy trust. They trample upon it when in the blind pursuit of selfish interests they collaborate with local leadership in thwarting what is the common good of the ordinary people. This is what needs to be reversed if trust and goodwill will be restored. They need to be *seen* to be fair.

<sup>674</sup> The above scenario is part of the reason why we included the global dimension in our study. If corruption is to be contained in Nigeria, the international governments that have deep interests in Nigeria need to come clean, play fair, and genuinely want the country to overcome corruption. A deliberate effort by such governments to work hard to reverse the burdens of skewed foreign policy objectives of yester years is a noble effort that will yield great dividends in time for both countries. Until such happens, it will be a near impossible task to eliminate systemic corruption in Nigeria without the active and “positive” collaboration of our imperialist political and economic godfathers (particularly the United States and Britain). We do not see anything inherently wrong in being a political or economic godfather so long as this status is not maintained at the detriment of the wellbeing of the common man. We will later explain the core elements of this collaboration.

<sup>675</sup> *Ibid.* p. 47

into the country. The banker will take bribe and keep illegal funds in their vaults.<sup>676</sup> The government hospitals are run down because equipments are often in disrepair despite huge monetary allocations; doctors paid to work in government hospitals use their job as “recruiting ground” for clients to their private clinics and hospitals. If you want “real treatment” you go to their private clinics. The government dispensaries only dispense “prescriptions” which you buy from the open markets. Before Prof. Dora Akunyili, the former Nigerian General Director of National Agency of Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC), from 2008-2010, closed the fake drug stores, the traders in the “open market” went to the extent of selling “baby food” stuffed into capsules as drugs!

Ndubisi describes “planned corruption” as an “instrument of control” that politicians use to “retain power at all costs”. The leadership in order to guarantee his stay in office doles out favors and benefices of his office based on political calculations rather than on any rules of conduct, merit or objective need. In other words, the leadership “dispenses the wealth of the nation as he pleases regardless of rules of conduct.”<sup>677</sup> In Nigeria we see this in lavish donations at public and private functions with no accountability, granting of contracts to cronies without due process (oil block allocation is one of the most juicy forms of political favor anyone could

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<sup>676</sup> There are too many heart-rending accounts relating to this: For instance, government officials were able to withdraw billions of naira of government funds and transfer them to personal accounts with collusion of bankers simply by limiting the amount to a legal limit but in “multiples” in one day. This was how billions of pension money was laundered into private accounts. The money was shared by all involved in the pension scam. A simple clerk on Level O4 had 18million naira in one of his accounts with the same bank where the pension fund was held in trust!

<sup>677</sup> Acha F. Ndubisi, *Op. Cit.*, p 48.

receive), political appointments based on favor than merit, pardoning of political criminals in order to return them to relevance.<sup>678</sup> An example is the Story below:

Alamieyeseigha was the elected governor of the oil-producing Bayelsa State in Nigeria from 1999 until his impeachment in 2005. As alleged in the U.S. forfeiture complaint, Alamieyeseigha's official salary for this entire period was approximately \$81,000, and his declared income from all sources during the period was approximately \$248,000. However, governor, Alamieyeseigha accumulated millions of dollars worth of property located around the world through corruption and other illegal activities. After his impeachment in Nigeria, Alamieyeseigha pleaded guilty in Nigeria for, among other things, failure to disclose a bank account in Florida and also pleaded guilty on behalf of his shell companies to money laundering violations. As further alleged in the complaint, the funds forfeited were held in an investment account in Boston that was fraudulently opened in the name of Nicholas Aiyegbemi and were traceable to the undisclosed Alamieyeseigha account in Florida... 'With a declared income of less than \$250,000, Mr. Alamieyeseigha accumulated millions of dollars' worth of property over a six-year period,' said Assistant Attorney General Breuer. 'Today's announcement – the first forfeiture judgment obtained under our Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative – sends a powerful message about the United States' commitment to rooting out corruption far and wide. ***Foreign corrupt officials are on notice that we will not permit them to stash their corruption proceeds on American soil.***'<sup>679</sup>

On June, 13, 2012 a U.S District Court Judge Rya W. Zobel, sitting in Massachusetts granted a motion for forfeiture of assets worth \$401,931.00 traceable to Alamieyeseigha. This is the first major judgment of this kind in the United States under a new legal arrangement on money laundering. Interestingly, the current President, Goodluck Jonathan, was the deputy Governor to Alamieyeseigha. His impeachment for fraud was what paved the way for Jonathan's ascendancy to political power (as governor). He now decided to favor his former boss by granting him amnesty at a time when the country is seriously in need of sending the right message about corruption. While we lament on this turn of events, we are excited that American government has finally woken up to its duties. There are many like Alamieyeseigha whose loot still corrodes

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<sup>678</sup> President Jonathan just granted amnesty to his convicted former boss (Gov. Alamieyeseigha) as the Federal government response to the judgment of forfeiture of assets traced to corruption. This shows how unserious the present government in Nigeria is about fighting corruption.

<sup>679</sup> See Department of Justice, <http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2012/June/12-crm-827.html> (The stress is ours).



the tills of U.S banks and whose properties tarnish the splendor of this great country. The U.S. government should pursue this noble course vigorously and pressure the Nigerian government in the right direction: fighting corruption by ensuring the proceeds of loot has no place to hide in America. This is to be the test case for Obama administration’s seriousness for helping to build stable institutions in Nigeria [and Africa], and as part of a broader roadmap (or moral high ground) for retrieving the proceeds of Nigerian scam artists, if not overcoming the attraction for international scams among Nigerian actors currently in the field.

Ndubisi also identified “developmental corruption”<sup>680</sup> as a distinct form of corruption perpetrated in government sectors handling developmental projects like building ports, roads, dams, schools, hospitals, among others. The tenders hardly follow any due process, and often given to a crony at an “up-front” fee – in Nigeria 10% of the contract price is the normal but may not be the only “fee” paid for contracts award. The winner of the contract often sub-contracts out to someone else and whatever remains of the “mobilization fee” (after paying the statutory 10%) is spent by the time the actual contractor gets his contract. This is one reason why some contracts are never finished. The other reason is that some contracts are never meant to be executed. There are many contracts that never took off at all even though money for it has been allocated or paid in full in the books.<sup>681</sup>

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<sup>680</sup> While this distinction is helpful in understanding certain aspects of corruption, we prefer to subsume it within the broader distinction of “systemic corruption.”

<sup>681</sup> Ndubisi asserts inter alia: “Awarding contracts that would never be executed after the contractors had received mobilization fees was a deliberate hidden policy of most of the past military governments (federal and state governments).” A. F. Ndubisi, *Op. Cit.*, p. 52 He cites in the same page the case of a governor in Anambra state who asked an obscure contractor to tender for road contract and inflate the cost of the contract from N4 million to N6 million and that he would use his executive power to approve the higher tender. The plan, according to his source, was that the company will be paid a mobilization fee of N2 million to purchase equipment valued at 0.3 million naira to enable it start the construction and then abandon it after three months. The governor will then confiscate the

The appetites of those interested in the funds for the government projects are insatiable. So, in some cases, the fee for doing the work increases exponentially with time – sometimes 500 % without the job getting done. An example is the National identity card project. A project initially estimated at a cost of 50million U.S dollars rose to \$214million dollars with only a handful of Nigerians getting it. The government functionaries involved were charged to court by the ICPC (Independent Corrupt Practices and Other related Offenses Commission) but the charges were later dropped. Now Billions more are being allocated for the same scheme. This is considered by critics as a “white elephant project” that the government uses as conduit to enrich itself or siphon money to its political cronies. Anyone familiar with corruption in Nigeria will be sympathetic to this view until proven otherwise.

We have provided only Nigerian examples in describing the nature of systemic corruption because this chapter focuses on Nigeria as a geophysical and socio-moral entity that localizes our study. But this should not lead the reader to forget that systemic corruption is a global phenomenon. Each of the cases described above and in the next segment all have their equivalences in North America, Europe, and Asia. In the next segment we simply provide a view from an “insider” that perhaps help illustrate better the nature of corruption in Nigeria.

#### **4.3 DIGGING DEEPER: THE NATURE OF SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA**

In this segment we try to look at corruption in Nigeria from the eyes of an *insider*: Ngozi Okonjo-Iwuala is the present finance minister and coordinates the Economic team of the present government; she was also the finance minister during the Obasanjo regime (1999-2007) whose

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equipment and sell it. The company will be richer by 0.5 million, and the governor will pocket 1million. The contract will be over. This fraudulent process could, and have been recycled over and over again by public executives in Nigeria.

administration initiated reform against corruption (she is a Harvard and MIT graduate, former vice president of the World Bank). She admitted in her book on this topic that “for far too long corrupt officials and their associates have acted with impunity in their corrupt dealings; and for any fight to be successful, impunity has to be reined in.”<sup>682</sup> She goes on to provide examples that not only illumines the nature of corruption in Nigeria but also illustrates the problem as systemic. She describes the nature of corruption in Nigeria as graded. She places at the top level “Corruption on a Grand Scale” that describes how public officials steal public assets.<sup>683</sup> Though she did not provide us any history of kleptomania among Nigerian executives, but she sheds light on two celebrated cases: The same Governor Alamiyeseigha cited above, was arrested at Heathrow airport, London on September 15, 2005, and a search of his home revealed £920,000.00 in cash. He was latter charged for laundering £1.8 million (this is different from the U.S. case described above). He was on bail, but he jumped bail and left Britain disguised as a woman. His subsequent impeachment made it possible to prosecute him since sitting governors enjoy immunity from prosecution. He was charged to court and sentenced for a short sting in jail.

James Ibori was another governor who is presently serving time in British prison (she mentioned him but did not provide details). Ibori stole millions of dollars from his oil rich state (Delta State). He jumped bail in London, but was found and extradited from Dubai. His arrest was as result of collaboration between Nigeria government and Britain. Scotland Yard lived up to its reputation for diligence and perseverance. In April, 17, 2012, he was sentenced by Southwark court in London for stealing \$250 million from his state. It was revealed he also used

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<sup>682</sup> Ngozi Okonjo-Iwuala, *Reforming the Unreformable: Lessons from Nigeria* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2012) Kindle Edition, Location 1809

<sup>683</sup> *Ibid*

his state as collateral for 40 billion naira loan (\$266 million). He had many companies he operated in Britain through agents that were also sentenced. Part of what was confiscated includes a £2.2 million pound home in North London; £311,000 home in Dorset, London; £3.2 million home in Johannesburg South Africa, A fleet of armored range rovers (£600,000.); Mercedes Benz Maybach 62 GT for which he paid €407,000.00 cash and a Bentley Continental GT (£120,000.). The central bank is said to keep in its custody as “exhibit” the \$15 million dollars bribe he gave to Nuhu Ribadu, the then Director of EFCC (Economic and Financial Crime Commission). Interestingly, most exhibits often develop wings and disappear. For example, Mustafa A. Balogun was Inspector General of Police (March 6. 2002- Jan. 2005) He was prosecuted and jailed (6 months!) for stealing billions of Naira of public fund. Actually 16 billion naira was actually recovered from him but that amount got missing between the new IGP and the EFCC! The same is the case with Abacha’s loot described below.

General Sani Abacha was the only Nigerian Head of State or President to ever have family prosecuted or flustered for fraud precisely because he was dead. He stole billions just like the rest of his “tribe”. According Okonjo-Iwuala, it is estimated that Abacha stole between \$3-5 billion U.S dollars of public fund and these were laundered to foreign banks abroad. She asserts:

Of the amount stolen, more than US \$ 2.2 billion was carted away from the Central Bank of Nigeria in truckloads of cash in the form of foreign currency and travelers checks. Most of this money was laundered abroad through a complex network of companies, banks, and shell concerns before finding its way into foreign bank accounts operated by the Abacha family and their cronies. At the peak of these activities, more than 70 companies, and more than 32 banks— including some of the world’s best-known banks— had money laundered through them.<sup>684</sup>

She also points out that contract inflation constitutes another form of fraud Abacha engaged in.

She cited the Pasteur Merieux Vaccines that was aimed at helping poor families. Abacha

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<sup>684</sup> Okonjo-Iweala, *Reforming the Unreformable, Op. Cit.*, Kindle Locations 1704-1706

awarded \$111 million contract to his family company (Morgan Procurement Ltd). The true cost was \$22.5million. The company pockets the excess amount (\$88.5 million).<sup>685</sup>

The involvement of foreign companies in massive corruption has a long history that is not peculiar to Nigeria.<sup>686</sup> Okonjo-Iwuala describes the Nigerian aspect of this problem in these words: “*Foreign companies have been involved in worst cases of corruption in developing countries. Nigeria is replete with accounts of such corrupt and corrupting behavior by foreign companies.*”<sup>687</sup> She cites Siemens as having admitted giving government officials €10million to facilitate contracts between 2001- 2004.<sup>688</sup> She then cites the TJSK consortium (comprising of Technip, France; Snamprogetti, Italy; Kellog Brown and Root, a Halliburton Subsidiary, U.S.A; JGC, Japan) were bidding to provide services to a \$12billion gas project owned jointly by Nigerian Government and Shell Group. It later won a \$2 billion contract after employing a “consultancy” firm (Tristar Investment) with a pledge that includes \$180 million bribe laundered to foreign accounts of some Nigerian government officials. She points out that “Nigerian people collectively pay the price of such bribery through inflated contracts and undermining of the country’s institutions.”<sup>689</sup>

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<sup>685</sup> *Ibid.* Kindle Location 1713

<sup>686</sup> The most recent report by International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) has shown how real and bogus companies have used “nominee directors” to secretly launder dirty money around the globe. We do hope that they could reveal where Nigerian government officials (past and present) hid their loot apart from a rather vague general mention of known havens like Swiss banks and some Western banks as referenced above. See <http://www.icij.org/blog/2013/04/highlights-offshore-leaks-so-far>; <http://www.icij.org/offshore/who-uses-offshore-world>; <http://www.icij.org/offshore>

<sup>687</sup> Okonjo-Iwuala, *Ibid.* Kindle Location 1718, the emphasis is ours.

<sup>688</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>689</sup> *Ibid.* Kindle location 1730

She also identifies “corruption from the bottom” that describes how the poor and vulnerable members of our society are “intimidated” by those who exercise some form of power over them. The example of Rose, a 21 year old girl undergraduate who was marked down by her professor because she could not afford to pay for the “handouts” (photocopies of lecture materials) either with money or “other means”. She was so demoralized that she dropped out, putting an end to one great effort to overcome the cycle of poverty. This form of corruption has become one of the most disturbing in recent years; one that needs urgent attention.

A systemic rot has befallen Nigeria once solid system of public tertiary education. Similar tales abound of public health workers asking for under-the-table payments for services and diverting hospital supplies, drugs, and equipment to their private clinic. Nigeria is bedeviled by very poor provision of public services in education and health, largely because of corruption and undermining of the institutions by a small percentage of the population.<sup>690</sup>

Obviously the above descriptive analysis of corrupt practices in Nigeria is far from exhaustive but it does reveal there is virtually no mechanism for accountability built into the system or rather, there is no effective implementation of existing mechanisms of accountability.<sup>691</sup> As such it becomes easy for the leadership to act with “impunity” either at the highest or lowest levels of service delivery. We will examine some solutions she proposes later.

While Okonjo-Iwuala provides an *insider view* of the reality of systemic corruption in Nigeria, we would also highlight some of **Daniel J. Smith’s** viewpoints that we consider a relatively objective analysis by an *outsider* (a western author) that this research could find on the

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<sup>690</sup> Okonjo-Iwuala, *Ibid.* Kindle Location, 1742

<sup>691</sup> Nigeria inherited the British Code of Conduct for public service and has evolved others codes and Tribunals (like the Code of Conduct Tribunal, with later additions by successive governments the latest of which is ICPC and the EFCC).

specific subject of systemic corruption in Nigeria.<sup>692</sup> His objectivity perhaps stems from his immersion in the country for about 15 years – he lived and taught in a Nigerian University as part of his social research as an anthropologist. He therefore had the opportunity to interact and do business with Nigerians and learn to see with their eyes. His interpretative analysis would therefore provide useful insight in understanding both the reality and the background of corruption in Nigeria from a more dispassionate observer and social scientist. Though his research was presented in a book of seven chapters, we will highlight the essential points of the first part of his work that help deepen our understanding of the nature of the problem.

Firstly, he argues that corruption in Nigeria can only be properly understood within a broader (and global) context of political and economic inequality. He considers it rather dubious for the developed nations to acknowledge corruption as a “pervasive” global problem, but in dealing with developing nations like Africa prefer to adopt a “misguided stereotypes” approach that links corrupt practices, poverty and other social maladies to a “timeless cultural traditions.”<sup>693</sup> So instead of using such “misguided” stereotyping to explain corruption in Nigeria or backwardness in Africa, should rather invest in understanding the larger context of historical patterns of political and economic inequalities that has left these nations and masses of their people vulnerable to a host of social ills that includes corruption.

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<sup>692</sup> See Daniel J. Smith, *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007) Kindle edition.

<sup>693</sup> *Ibid*, Kindle Location 565. He illustrates this with example examples: Italy, for instance, is a nation that its own scholars admit is riddled with corruption but remains a “respectable” member of G8

Secondly, he admits that while it is obvious “Nigerian e-mail scams”<sup>694</sup> are symbolic of why Nigerians have bad reputation worldwide, however, its international dimension “obscures the fact that the primary victims of Nigerian corruption are Nigerians not foreigners.”<sup>695</sup> He explains that these are scams crafted by a *few* con artists in Nigeria and practiced on unsuspecting Nigerians on daily basis in form of “advance fee,” “fake contracts” and “impostor official” frauds that many gullible Nigerians are constant victims. It only gained international notoriety by virtue of internet access. Therefore to think that its primary targets are *only* foreigners is grossly misleading. He says:

The main losers in all these schemes are the ordinary Nigerians, because national resources are looted and squandered by a relatively small group of criminals, international investors are extremely wary of Nigeria, and Nigerian global reputation is smeared to the point where many honest Nigerians living, travelling or doing business abroad are assumed to be criminals until they prove otherwise.<sup>696</sup>

He admits that the *king-pins* (the real masterminds) of Nigerian criminal networks should be categorized among the international criminals of the ranks of brutal dictators, bank “execu-

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<sup>694</sup> These are letters sent by con artists (mostly from Nigeria) as part of “confidence tricks” that lure people into parting with their money after first establishing the “trust” of their victims by promising to transfer huge amounts of money (either stolen or inherited) into their victims personal accounts in order to elude local law or detection.

<sup>695</sup> *Ibid.* Kindle Location 586

<sup>696</sup> *Ibid.*, Kindle Location 593. We agree totally with this assessment having witnessed directly this form of treatment for many years while studying and working abroad as a Nigerian. Profiling and stereotyping the Nigerian as *first a criminal until he proves otherwise* comes at a very high cost to self-respect and human dignity that only experience duly appreciates its pain. This dehumanizing practice ought to stop because it is the seedbed for grooming ill will against the West. Many honest Nigerians are repeatedly harassed and made to pay a painful price for being honest. Due to the power of prejudice, some westerners are never satisfied that a Nigerian is ever honest even when he/she has proved it with many years of record. If one’s record does not prove it, what does? This is an irrational mindset that should never be part of State policy not only because of its capacity to destroy peoples’ lives but that these encounters provide openings for sowing seeds of “hate” instead of “love” for a country of one’s dreams. The struggle today to reverse the negative mindset in the Arab world against the West should have started long ago in *paying attention to how people are treated*. Nobody loves to suffer for a crime he did not commit. Honest Nigerians should not be made to suffer for being honest law abiding citizen where they reside. If such dehumanizing practice continues, its cumulative effect on the psyche of a people can be predicted.



thieves,” ponzy-schemers, or the mafia of any stripe.<sup>697</sup> However, he notes that the interpretive narrative changes if one realizes that the low-level senders of the bulk of these scam letters are young (mostly between 18-25 years age range), jobless school dropouts and unemployed graduates who struggle to survive in a system broken down by monumental corruption of its leadership often with the collaboration of foreign partners. It is not an accident that the *content* of these letters reflect a mindset that describes direct or indirect collaboration of “developed” countries in the looting of Nigeria (and Africa) as confirmed above by Okonjo-Iwuala. Ironically, the relative success of these scam letters is an unsettling “proof” of the assumptions behind them. Unfortunately, those who reap the dividends of the e-mail scams are hardly the poor jobless guy in the cyber-café in Nigeria but the few at the top who have the resources to pull through with its complex demands that includes being well “connected” at the top in a complex but loosely connected network.<sup>698</sup>

Smith recounts his experience as project adviser to an NGO under the auspices of USAID in Nigeria that is of critical importance for this study. He describes how presumptions about Nigerian corruption “infused” his thinking such that he was sucked into participating in “discourses and practices” that maintain inequality and “reproduce stereotypes” about corruption of Third world partners [and Nigerians].<sup>699</sup> Given the deluge of explicit warnings from his supervisors and other expatriate colleagues, he was predisposed to finding corruption everywhere. He was therefore ever on the alert with suspicion and distrustful of those he had to

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<sup>697</sup> Smith addresses other aspects of Nigerian corruption in areas like NGOs and Politics that this chapter cannot accommodate.

<sup>698</sup> *Ibid.* Kindle Locations 727-730.

<sup>699</sup> *Ibid.*, kindle location 1571

work with. He had to cross check everything, and sometimes do some clandestine investigation to find out if for instance the drivers used the office vehicle for personal purposes, wondered if those who negotiated purchases got kickbacks, or if trainers paid the locals what was stipulated for them, and his inner struggle to teach the trainees how to write grants, among others. He says

With hindsight and the aid of greater familiarity with social science literature about the dynamics of inequality, particularly in the arena of development, it is now much easier to see that I was not in fact a watchdog against corruption but a culpable and complicit actor in the whole enterprise of development-related corruption (Hancock 1989; de Waal 1997; Uvin 1998). During my years with the NGO I never stole any project money. I never took a kickback from a contractor, or awarded a job to a friend or a relative. I never submitted fake receipts to reimburse myself for expenses not incurred. By any conventional Western standard, I could not be reasonably accused of involvement in corruption. But if I examine my life as an expatriate working for a development project critically, it becomes clear that my vigilance regarding corruption among my Nigerian counterparts involved significant hypocrisy. My assumptions, privileges, and lifestyle were at least as morally problematic as anything I feared my Nigerian colleagues could have done with project resources....First and foremost, the hypocrisy of expatriates who criticize Nigerian corruption is evident in the inequality that characterizes the differences in economic position between expatriate staff and even the most senior local stag.<sup>700</sup>

He goes on to describe how he earns a salary of \$29,000.00 which, by the way, in 1989 is very modest by United States standards. But his Nigerian counterpart, the project manager (his equal, if not superior) earns \$400.00 a month. He, Smith, has free fully furnished housing, free utilities like power where the town has none. He has the services of a night guard, and the compound supervisor doubles as steward, cook, errand-boy who does the shopping, cleaning, washing, etc. The guard earns less than \$50.00 dollars a month and has 10 children to support. While it is not realistic expecting that these people be on the same salary scale as himself, rather, the problem is the *selective vision* (the “blindness”) that sees only the corrupt practices or its possibility without at the same time seeing the inequality that motivates or reinforces such corruption. Here is what he says:

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<sup>700</sup> *Ibid*, kindle location 1613-1615.

Part of the context of understanding Western culpability, and in this case my own complicity, in sustaining Nigeria's notorious corruption is recognizing the peculiarity of a system that legitimizes my privilege, but is on the lookout for a local staff person who awards a contract to provide office stationery to an in-law to help a struggling business, or might terminate a driver who carries passengers for a fee in the office vehicle on his way back from an assignment in order to raise some extra cash for his children's school fees. These actions are viewed by Westerners as forms of corruption. *Yet the larger system of inequality is taken for granted, at least by most of us who are its principal beneficiaries.*<sup>701</sup>

He argues that though Nigerians are aware of these disparities and resent them, they were also “resigned” to them. While he did not witness any open antagonism, he does wonder if their perception of the gross inequalities provide “justification for corruption?” Could these inequalities invoke a feeling of “entitlement”? Is it possible that the “corrupt” Nigerian NGOs “see themselves as entitled to these resources as a kind of compensation for these inequalities?”<sup>702</sup> Smith answers these in the affirmative.

It is important to highlight Smith’s argument that the content of email scam letters are “cultural commentaries”<sup>703</sup> of the perception of the average Nigerian describing how the Nigerian leadership has pillaged their country in collaboration with their foreign partners in crime. The significance of this hermeneutic is crucial for two reasons. First, it reveals a mindset that not only rationalizes criminal behavior but actually intent on justifying it.<sup>704</sup> There is perhaps a conscious or unconscious intent on retrieving what they consider is legitimately theirs. It makes little sense to merely argue that this perception is misguided.<sup>705</sup> There is overwhelming evidence

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<sup>701</sup> *Ibid*, Kindle Location 1634-1635. The emphasis is ours.

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid*, Kindle Location 748

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid*, Kindle Location 1515

<sup>705</sup> It will be naïve if not simply ridiculous to hope that a people who have witnessed the level of looting in Nigeria should feel otherwise. If such monumental pillage that has brutalized and paralyzed masses of its people has happened in any of the developed countries of the Northern Hemisphere especially the United States and Western

that the wealth of the country is being pillaged and siphoned off to foreign countries that the average Nigerian can assess on a daily basis. The samples above are but the tip of the iceberg.<sup>706</sup>

Secondly, any effort to contain or eradicate scam emails that does not seriously address this mindset becomes an effort in “selective vision” that is doomed to fail because it merely treats the symptoms rather than the disease. This research prefers a holistic approach that understudies the roots of the disease without neglecting to pay attention to the symptoms as well.

#### 4.4. NIGERIAN SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION

For me, I am just struggling. I could not finish university because my parents did not have the money and our government does not care about the people. Obasanjo and his boys are stealing so much money while the rest of the society is falling apart. That's the real 419. ***What I am doing is just trying to survive. I would not be here sending these e-mails looking for rich, greedy foreigners if there were opportunities in Nigeria.*** How much do I really get from this anyway? The people getting rich from this are the same people at the top who are stealing our money. I am just a struggle-man.<sup>707</sup>

Those are the words of a Nigerian e-mail scam writer. The emphasis illustrates already the theme for this segment. Social conditions influence behavior. Not that we are taking scam artists words for it. In chapter one our analysis of moral responsibility indicates that we are “responders” to what is done to us. In chapter two our analyses reveal that moral development is a natural

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Europe, it will be definitely considered an act of treason – a national security matter. The foreign culprits will be considered “enemies of the State” and treated as such. Every tool of state power will be used to bring them to justice and rightly so. Unfortunately, this kind of thinking is not extended to those who *sully the image* of these “great” nations abroad. They turn a blind eye to those who steal from the poor (“beggar countries”) and grow fat on the blood of the starving. And it is precisely this sullied image that has groomed the crimes and terror they now have to spend trillions of dollars combating. This approach of “selective vision” is not only immoral but irrational.

<sup>706</sup> Nigerians are daily inundated with news of corruption which always ends up being overtaken by more of the same without anyone being punished for it. The latest of such was the fuel subsidy scam (2012) where the government budget was \$1.5 billion but a probe panel revealed government expenditure was actually \$15billion! The central bank, NNPC (a government-run company in charge of oil), the Auditor General all have different figures. Even the Chairman of the probe Hon. Lamido Farouk was accused of receiving bribe for \$3million to bury the case. At this time, nothing came of the investigation which was televised on National television. See also <http://economicconfidential.net/new/news/national-news/1235-n108-trillion-2012-revenues-where-is-the-evidence>

<sup>707</sup> Daniel Jordan Smith. *Op. Cit.* Kindle Locations 732-736. Obasanjo was the President of Nigeria (1999-2007).

process that is either enabled or thwarted by environmental factors. Social conditions such as “unemployment,” not only have direct economic costs but also psycho-moral costs.<sup>708</sup> When we are pushed to the wall, survival instinct takes over and becomes the primary driver for action. It is therefore self-evident that moral integrity is difficult to attain in an environment where there is little accountability. The foregoing confirms there is little accountability for public funds in Nigeria. This reality constitutes the major theme of daily conversation among Nigerians.

But Nigerians are a very resilient and forbearing people.<sup>709</sup> For instance, the Niger Delta people have watched helplessly for decades as their land bleeds liquid gold (oil) and the money carted away into private pockets of government functionaries. They are left with wastelands and polluted waters that take away from them even the capacity to earn a living. Without industries, even basic utilities in these communities, their youths are left with little option but to seek redress but by unlawful means. This resulted in blown pipes, more environmental disasters, and many lost lives. But it took that crude form of intervention for our leaders to begin to consider development plan for the Niger Delta that ought to have been a default standard approach from the onset. What this gross oversight has introduced in the system is a pattern of corruption in the oil sector. It will take years to plug the gaping hole created by oil bunkering and theft that recent investigation (2012) reveals is at 250,000 barrels per day which translates to about \$6.2 billion

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<sup>708</sup> See C.D. Dooley and R.A Catalano, “Psychological Effects of Unemployment,” in *Journal of Social Issues*, 4:1988

<sup>709</sup> It could also be argued that what is considered “resilience” is another way to express “psychological defeat” - a condition of surrendering one’s fate to forces of domination and oppression. Paulo Freire describes well this condition as part of the strategy of the oppressor to keep the people *sedated* (“anesthetize the people so they will not think”) using manipulation or force to keep them in this state (P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 149).

dollars as annual loss to the national purse.<sup>710</sup> Though this research is not about Niger Delta crisis, but its complexity illumine the goals of this research. There are many literatures specific to the Niger Delta crisis. For instance, Eboeime and Omotor argue as follows:

The activities of the multinational oil firms have been characterized by severe environmental problems in host communities. These include the physical alienation of scarce agricultural land by oil exploration and production companies; the flaring of over 70 percent of associated gas, which causes acid rain, reduces soil fertility, pollutes sources of drinking water, incorporates carcinogens into both marine and aquatic food chains, generates intense heat and perpetually banish night in many host communities; fishery decline; biodiversity loss; delta forest loss and land degradation. Frequent oil spillage has also been reported as a major cause of decline in agricultural decline and increase in health problems attributable to oil industry activities (see Shell 2000, Nyemutu Robert 1998, Obi 1997, Ikein 1990).<sup>711</sup>

They argue that the Niger Delta, from where the oil wealth of the nation flows is the poorest developed of the entire country. Even the recent intervention programs aimed at alleviating poverty in the region are being directed to the rich than the core poor. Our view is that the Niger Delta crises (poverty and militancy) could have been avoided if excessive greed and self-interest have not blinded reason all these years. It was the poor socio-economic conditions of people of the Niger Delta that gave birth to armed struggle which, apart from loss of lives, further exposed the region to the massive oil theft, vandalizing of oil pipelines and subsequent spillage that further devastates the region. Moreover, by exposing this region to the oil *mafia* also gorges open

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<sup>710</sup> <http://economicconfidential.net/new/news/national-news/1235-n108-trillion-2012-revenues-where-is-the-evidence>

1263-fg-deliberately-misrepresenting-me-on-foreign-reserves-oby-ezekwesili

<sup>711</sup> Matthew I. Eboeime and Douglaston G. Omotor, "Development Interventions of Oil Multinationals in Nigeria's Niger Delta: for the rich or the poor?" in *Anatomy of the Niger Delta Crisis, Causes, Consequences and Opportunities for Peace*, Victor Ojatorotu editor (Munster: Lit Verlag, 2010), p. 64: See also O. G Omene, "The Impact of Oil Exploration on the Inhabitants of Oil Producing Areas of Nigeria," in *Journal of Food, Agriculture and Environment* (2009), cited by Eboeime and Omotor, *Ibid.* p.63

a channel to other nefarious activities in a region with a nebulous history.<sup>712</sup> The political resolution achieved with the militancy is only a temporary measure won at very high socio-moral costs. Nigeria is once again being led by the nose and exposed to a dangerous pattern of “settling” criminals in order to maintain a fragile peace needed to keep oil wealth flowing. This is how a culture of corruption evolves and systematized.

Recent investigation revealed that 88 percent of the oil blocks are owned and operated by multinational oil companies (Shell, Exxon-Mobil, Chevron, Total Elf, Agip, Addax) who collectively produced in 2012 over 80% of Nigerian crude (2,212,445bpd) as against indigenous production of 276,000bpd.<sup>713</sup> Some are scandalized by this figure on the basis of its absurdity but our concern is what it implies in a culture like Nigeria. It will be hard to explain how one acquires 80% of a nation’s oil reserve except you have been hand-in-gloves with the very leaders that have milked the country dry. Even then, you would have thought that such enormous privilege could have been an incentive to prioritize community development in the Niger Delta. It will be ridiculous to imagine that these multinationals do not understand what priority to *community development* entails in their field.<sup>714</sup> Why should it take only serious violence – one

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<sup>712</sup> We think the marginalization that led to militancy and oil bunkering activities has opened up the sensitivities of this region to both old wounds and old passions because of its notoriety during the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

<sup>713</sup> See Segun Adeniyi, “Real Ownership of Indigenous Oil Blocks Revealed, *Economic Confidential*, Online edition, March 2013, <http://economicconfidential.net/new/financial/facts-a-figures/1280-real-ownership-of-indigenous-oil-blocks-revealed>.

<sup>714</sup> We are aware of the complexity associated with settling different groups of disaffected peoples in the Niger Delta. We argue that such complexity would not have arisen if there has been a proactive approach *ab initio*, a “blue print” for the development of the Niger Delta that includes infrastructural development, educational and employment opportunities for these communities. Selective approach to settlements, directed at chiefs, or prominent members of the community only succeeded in increasing inequality and triggering discontent that results in more settlements of the “vociferous” and “loud”; and the cycle repeats itself. The same strategy is what is still adopted for “settling” recent MEND militants. It is a time-bomb waiting to explode. Other “leaders” will emerge, and the war will once more resume.

that results in loss of crude production and/or profit to bring attention to an issue that ought to be a default measure? This is how a people become “groomed” in deviancy. Hence, it is not just by exploiting and maintaining inequality in the Niger Delta that they have implicated themselves with the evolution of a culture of corruption but even the method adopted for “cleaning-up-the-mess” may imply grooming immorality and reinforcing corruption.

The United States Department of State travel advisory for Nigeria commonly paints a gory picture of life conditions in the country.<sup>715</sup> Reading it you would wonder how on earth do people live there? It paints a picture of a country that lacks not just basic social utilities like good roads, transportation, power and water supply but more importantly that you are not safe in many parts of the country. It warns that “visitors and residents have experienced armed muggings, assaults, burglaries, car-jacking, rapes, kidnappings, extortions, often involving violence.”<sup>716</sup> It adds that the police are usually not responsive when any of these happen. It identifies many part of the North that travel is not recommended because of bombings and killings which has become a constant part of experience there due to the activities of *Boko Haram* an Islamic militant group. Thousands of lives have been lost as they go on rampage bombing churches while in session, setting homes ablaze while people sleep. The internet is replete with pictures of their victims.

This research is not about image laundering. We admit there is so much insecurity in Nigeria that it bellies any problem the common Nigerian had to confront. Travelling by road is not safe not just because roads are death traps (except that some improvements have been made more recently) but that armed robbers have been known to open fire on big transport buses and

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<sup>715</sup> [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_987.html#safety](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_987.html#safety)

<sup>716</sup> *Ibid*



both the corpses and those lucky to be alive have been robbed after first stripping them naked to ensure they have not hidden money anywhere. This is changing too as the economy transitions gradually to cashless economy. Armed robbers had a free reign in some cities at one time or another to the extent they were actually sending “Notice” to residents informing them when they were coming. The idea was that “you better keep money for us or else you will be sorry”. And they usually keep to their schedule!

Now, this is happening in a country where low level government functionaries have a resident police escort. Private person who have the means can pay for *police escort* that follows them around for protection. This is *national security for hire* that is still practiced today. The poor are left to their fate. They not only have to worry about how to earn their daily bread (millions have no jobs, no welfare for the unemployed, the government does not yet have such statistics), but also they are exposed to death on the road, in the street, and at home. If they get sick, they have no insurance. To get treatment many have sold their lands and all available assets. So, if you do not die of hunger, you may not be lucky with disease. If you are lucky to be alive and healthy, you may not escape the bullet of the armed robber or the bomb of a militant. If you struggle out of all these, and perhaps lucky to have a successful son, daughter, brother, or sister abroad, you become a moving target for kidnappers who are looking for ransom! And supposing they have not gotten to you in any of these other means, you might run into *ritual killers* or other gory situations dealing with dark forces.<sup>717</sup> In these situations, the common belief is that people in power are often implicated.

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<sup>717</sup> See Smith, *Op. Cit.*

The above is but a partial and soft description of the social conditions the average Nigerian has to endure in a country where billions of dollars go into private pockets and siphoned away to foreign lands. The question is, “if you find yourself in such a space, would you conscientiously claim it cannot influence your actions?” If it does, is it possible for you determine *a priori* the direction of influence? It is critical asking these questions because unless those engaged in the project called Nigeria (either economically or intellectually) are in touch with the harsh realities of the suffering of the common Nigerian, they will not understand the deeper roots of those “scam letters” and other forms of scams emerging from there. These harsh social conditions explain why the average Nigerian would prefer to “check out” abroad, and they are leaving in droves to other countries in search of greener pastures that create its own peculiar problems.<sup>718</sup> But these realities do not necessarily imply or suggest that all Nigerians are corrupt as many Westerners must have realized through dealing with them. However it does provide a context that illumines the problem.

#### **4.5. Theological Reflection on Sociality of Sin: Sinful Social Structures**

The rediscovery of the social nature of sin is perhaps one of the theological breakthroughs of the last century. Biblical scholars agree as to the scriptural basis of the idea of social solidarity and social consequences characterizing sin.<sup>719</sup> Patrick Kerans made a critical

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<sup>718</sup> The “brain drain” factor remains a major problem for Nigeria and other African countries despite the argument that the money remitted effectively balances out its deficits. Often it is the brightest and most talented that leaves our shores to other lands leaving the country depleted of necessary brain power and talents for its transformation. Ironically, despite the many contributions of these Nigerians (doctors, Nurses, engineers, technocrats, among others) in their countries of residence, there is hardly any positive image accruing to it from the media except the negatives – of crime, and of course without referencing its enabling condition: the looting spree and particularly where the funds went – to the “developed world.”

<sup>719</sup> Scholars agree that that Genesis 3-11 is an account of the social effects of sin and its historical development. See Patrick O’Keefe, *What are they Saying about Social Sin* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1990), p.6

analysis of the Christian idea of Sin tracing its evolution from the idea of evil to an understanding of the notion of social sin.<sup>720</sup> The evolution of this concept is not our concern here but rather to underscore the critical importance that an understanding of this notion entails for any relevant theological reflection affecting a specific socio-cultural group. While the idea of the personal responsibility is not lost to our Christian understanding of sin, but articulating a social dimension of sin is a paradigm shift that enriches the extensions of that responsibility.

As social organisms, individuals live in community within a web of social relationships. Social scientists have helped us deepen our understanding of the nature of this relationship between the individual and society. Berger and Lukmann affirm a “dialectical relationship” between individual and his social world. According to them, “Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product.”<sup>721</sup> Henriot explains these as a dialectical process represented in three moments: “externalization,” “objectivation,” and “internalization.” Externalization represents the origins of society as a construct of individual persons as they “externalize” values they consider important to them. These structures over time take a life of their own as they achieve “objective” status as an autonomous life-style or culture. At this level, no conscious choice of individual persons is needed to maintain this lifestyle. Henriot explains that at this level “reification” may occur. This simply means the tendency to see a particular way of life as beyond human constructs but seen as either natural or an act of God.<sup>722</sup> Reification is

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<sup>720</sup> Patrick Kerans, *Sinful Social Structures* (New York: Paulist Press, 1974). Note that Kerans work is dedicated to understanding the sinful social structures particularly in North America to which he adopts “inversion of categories” as a method towards that understanding.

<sup>721</sup> Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), p. 61, Cited by O’Keefe, *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>722</sup> O’keefe, *Ibid*, p.45.

considered as a serious obstacle to change. Finally, “internalization” is the necessary consequence of “objectivation.” This is how a given society socializes the individuals in it. A given community begins to do things in a given way and will claim against forces of change: “this is how we have always done it.” In other words, a given way of acting becomes inherited and passes from one generation to the next. It becomes a way of life into which individuals are born and bred. It becomes their reality, their life, their world. It is therefore not surprising that it is often difficult to bring those socialized within a given cultural context to “see” what is perhaps so obvious to an external observer. Francis Bacon called it “idols” that influence our perception.

Social structures of sin therefore refer to ‘institutionalized wrongdoing’ or a ‘system of oppression’. O’Keefe definition of “social structure” provides some clarity to the term:

[A]n ordered pattern of relations that is established and becomes routine. Structures involve policies and institutions that make up the patterns of societal organization as well as the worldviews, perspectives, and value systems by which we interpret our experiences so as to bring coherence and meaning into our lives. Structures therefore are both external and internal to the individual person. In order to bring about a lasting reform of external structures, it is often necessary to bring about a change in the internal structures.<sup>723</sup>

The key point is “ordered pattern of relations” that has become routine within a given society or community. Institutions are part of the “structures” of society and within a given social system. O’keefe goes on to define “institutions” as “a distinctive complex of actions, providing procedures through which human conduct is patterned, e.g. marriage and organized religion.”<sup>724</sup> It provides “typologies for our actions,” and in this way influences our behavior. Finally, he

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<sup>723</sup> Mark O’Keefe, What are they Saying about Social Sin?, *Ibid.* p.46

<sup>724</sup> O’Keefe, *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47

defines “systems” as “a complex of social structures and institutions.”<sup>725</sup> In other words, “systems” is a more general concept that could include structures and institutions.

It might then become clearer why we said above that “social structures of sin” in this study refers to “institutionalized wrongdoing” or a “system of oppression.” We are not concerned with the different structures or institutions within a given system or society but specifically with that aspect of it that has a negative influence on human behavior. It is meant to capture the “totality of circumstances”<sup>726</sup> that prevails over an individual within a given society and at a particular time. The influence of this “totality of circumstances” on human behavior is presumably enormous. It is “assumed” because it cannot be wholly grasped much less computed. It makes sense when Patrick Kerans distinguishes between “circumstances” and “situation” giving greater extension and influence to the former.<sup>727</sup> It takes time to build a system of oppression but once in place, it has far reaching effects and takes time to dismantle. While it is inconceivable that a specific individual may be held responsible for building any given system of oppression, it however remains true that such a system is the responsibility of the individuals in it. Vatican II points out the integral relationship between personal sin and social structures:

To be sure the disturbances which so frequently occur in the social order result in part from the natural tensions of economic, political, and social forms. But at a deeper level they flow from man’s pride and selfishness, which contaminate even the social sphere. When the structure of affairs is flawed by the consequences of sin, man, already born with a bent toward evil, finds there new inducements to sin, which cannot be overcome without strenuous efforts and the assistance of grace.<sup>728</sup>

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<sup>725</sup> O’Keefe, *Ibid.* pp. 47

<sup>726</sup> Piet Schoonenberg used this term to explain what it means to be “situated”. See P. Schoonenberg, *Man and Sin* (Notre Dame: University Press, 1965), pp.104-5.

<sup>727</sup> Patrick Kerans, *Sinful Social Structures*, *Ibid.* p.74

<sup>728</sup> Vatican II Documents: *Gaudium et Spes*, n.25.

Though the construction of a ‘system of sin’ is a complex, it remains true to say it finds its deepest roots in “man’s pride and selfishness.” In chapter two we have noted particularly the role of conscience as a natural mechanism for self-transcendence. We have argued that without conscience, we lose our capacity for altruism and give free reign to the beast in us that acts only in self-interest. Without conscience, we build and enable structures of sin. Metaphors have been suggested as helpful in understanding the nature of Sin and social sin for that matter.

Patrick McCormick examined sin under six different metaphors.<sup>729</sup> Using the metaphor of “sin as an addiction,” he helps us see not just how sinful acts could become addictive but underscores the nature of influence one kind of sin could have on another forming a chain that sometimes engulfs a whole nation.<sup>730</sup> Keran’s idea of “knowing ignorance” is a metaphor he uses to explain the root of social sin in “bias”. We dwelt extensively on the roots of bias in chapter three to explain *tribalism*. Keran here considers “bias” as the “source of irrationality” that is at the “heart of sin” – and particularly as it affects social sin.<sup>731</sup> Keran argues that there is a dialectical relationship between individuals and situations as well as society. We have noted above the distinction he makes between circumstances and situation. While “circumstances” are all the factors that exclude (“not me”) and is beyond the control of the individual, “situation” includes the subject, and is within his vision and consciousness. It is that part of his circumstances he is aware of and doing something about – implying an interaction. He argues

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<sup>729</sup> McCormick examined sin under six headings: stain, crime, spiral, personal, sickness, addiction, See *Sin as Addiction* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1989).

<sup>730</sup> Helen Caldicott’s work, *Missile Envy*, documents how “American Greed supports its militarism” around the world. See Caldicott, *Missile Envy* (New York: Bantam Books, 1986), p. 265.

<sup>731</sup> Patrick Kerans, *Sinful Social Structures*, p. 72

that “most of the factors in a situation, no matter how private and intimate, are structured by society.” The implication here is that our “knowledge, attitude, and behavior” are learned or the product of socialization. How to cope with problems is a critical part of that socialization.

Interestingly, we inherited part of the solutions to life’s problems. Nobody wants to reinvent the wheel. So, we follow a pattern of behavior that was prescribed to us. The acceptance of this pattern is so thorough such that it has become a form of “reality”. He says, “reality itself is limited to that which everyone thinks it is. This is general bias.”<sup>732</sup> This is institutionalized behavior. If the behavior is wrong or sinful, it is a social form of sin, and the social structure that enables it is systematized. He argues further:

We learn early to act on the basis of our own biased insight into a situation – a bias towards protecting our own personal interest. This further skews the subsequent situation, provoking others to still further defensive action... Bias, narrow self-interest, defensiveness, shortsightedness – these qualities are all dynamic qualities. They tend to overcome their opposites.<sup>733</sup>

There is no doubt that corruption in Nigeria is enabled by sinful social structures. We identified in chapter three how the basic framework of this structure in more traditional societies like Nigeria is “tribalism” which is the institutionalization of narrow “self-interest” that activates “bias, defensiveness, shortsightedness,” and in the case of Nigeria *insatiable greed* that tilts the scale of any sense of social equality outrageously out of balance. Since everyone is seeking his narrow self-interest, there is universal distrust of each against all. Every opportunity given for service translates as one to have a cut of the national “cake” (and as much a chunk as one possibly can!). It is not strange that local tribalists develop affiliation, a form of *intentional* “kinship” with “international tribalists” analogous to what Kelly Greenhill calls “kleptocratic

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<sup>732</sup> Patrick Kerans, *Sinful Social Structures*, P. 76.

<sup>733</sup> Kerans, *Ibid.* pp.77-78

interdependence,”<sup>734</sup> since they share same interests (personal and/or private profit at all costs and to the detriment of any rational sense of the common good). In such a Hobbesian jungle, it is survival of the fittest, and the vulnerable poor are constantly used as baits for carnivores with voracious appetites. Such diseased minds can only spin out *irrational choices* from “excellencies” and “distinguished” gentlemen/women such that the wheels of statecraft spiral out of control towards the precipice. Obviously, corrupt behavior (like every sin), is addictive and possibly infectious if the conditions are right.

We noted in the foregoing chapter our extraordinary capacity for *miming*. So, just as tribalism is *mimed* or learned by those exposed to it, corruption is learnt by gradual assimilation of it as “acceptable behavior.” It becomes a “social sin” or “socialized sin”. When policemen openly demand bribe as a “right” each time they stop you at their checkpoints, they not only scandalize masses of younger people but are actually playing a critical role in institutionalizing corrupt practices and deforming of individual and collective consciences. It is the moral equivalent of a priest abusing young people. They destroy that which it is their primary duty to protect. It has become an unwritten rule that you cannot get any service from the police without bribing your way to it unless you have some connections at the top to give orders to subordinates (“*Oga*’ at the top”). But then, there are certain attenuating “circumstances” that make some of their actions not so culpable. It is a fact that the police are underpaid. But even that meager salary

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<sup>734</sup> Kelly Greenhill explains “kleptocracy as “government characterized by rampant greed and corruption’ which privilege the personal wealth and political power of government officials and the ruling class at the expense of the population.” And “kleptocratic interdependence” he describes as “a set of profit- and power-driven, self-reinforcing domestic and international relationships between criminal groups and government officials.” This relationship is characterized by four conditions: Sharing of Sovereignty (political, functional, and social powers of the State), privileging of private gain over public good in poorly run countries, poor legal or juridical accountability, some fusion of licit and illicit economy. See Greenhill, “Kleptocratic Interdependence: Trafficking, Corruption, and the Marriage of Politics and Illicit Profits,” in *Corruption, Global Security, and World Order* edited by Robert I. Rotberg (Kindle Locations 1348-1349, 1405 and 1409). Kindle Edition.



have been known in the past to be withheld for months by their bosses who leave them in interest yielding accounts while their poor colleagues wait on their goodwill.

When traditional rulers give “sacred titles” to someone who became rich overnight by looting state or national treasury or a similar crime, proclaiming him/her an “illustrious son/daughter” constitutes the deepest rupture in the moral consciousness of the younger generation. While anthropologists like Smith might describe this as part of “kinship patronage system” that does not in all cases carry the same moral weight equivalent to Western conception of corruption, we have reservations for this explanation. While his view is a common explanation among social scientists for any patron-client relationships found in most cultures in varying degrees, we reject its “relativization” or “de-moralization” of an obvious wrongdoing since it poses the greatest threat to any reform effort. There is no moral justification for doing the same things you readily condemn in others. If the village chiefs think it is “wrong” for public servants like Abacha to cart away billions of dollars of public funds from the central bank and dump them into his private account for personal use, their own kinsman doing the same does not justify it except if they are bent on building a kingdom of thieves. It is about the objective evil inherent in that type of behavior we call “stealing”. A consistent rationalization of “stealing” masked by repeated appeals to native kinship patronage only helps to consolidate the rupture that already exist in the psycho-social framework for moral development. This is how tribalism first destroys a system before it eventually self-destructs. The same is true of the mentality that rationalizes racism or xenophobia.

Interestingly, in some Nigerian moral traditions, stealing is considered a cardinal “sin” or wrongdoing. For instance, among the Igbos, persons of shady characters, those who “steal” other peoples’ stuff (material goods like goat, yam, clothing, money, among others), are often

“eliminated” or made to “disappear.” This means they are killed by community justice system because they constitute a threat to the entire wellbeing of the community. A personal experience was in the late 70s (79-80) when a “cleansing” of the land of all armed bandits and criminals of that stripe was carried out by young traders in Onitsha, Nkpor and beyond in old Anambra state of Eastern Nigeria. It was called “boys Oye!” All the crooks (particularly armed bandits) who have been terrorizing the land were searched out, executed in public and burnt. This *jungle justice* continues to happen from time to time in the East of the country primarily because the government security system is grossly inefficient. The most recent was carried out by a vigilante group (Bakkassi Boys) also in Igboland but were later disbanded by Obasanjo regime for their excesses.<sup>735</sup>

The point is that traditionally, stealing is considered a *cardinal offense* in the traditional Igbo mindset and by extension most of the other tribes as well. Perhaps retrieving the power inherent in language would re-capture the Nigerian and African imagination that *corruption* is *stealing*. We addressed in chapter three the role of *shame* and *guilt* in traditional African society. We shall address some of these in the concluding part of this chapter and the next. African moral tradition is founded on “sharing” but had always excluded “sharing ill-gotten wealth” since it dishonors both humans, the gods, and the ancestors. There is an obvious need to retrieve this older ideal of “sharing” through a constructive hermeneutic that articulates a morality for nation building if not for a morality of personal transformation.

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<sup>735</sup> The “Bakkassi Boys” is a local vigilante group that emerged in Anambra State, East of Nigeria in 1998 as a response to the heightened state of insecurity. Armed robbers were having a field day and the poor masses were helpless. They were first composed of traders and artisans but as their demand spread across the South-East, they probably got mingled with persons of questionable character. They were disbanded in 2002 by the Obasanjo regime. See Daniel Smith, *Op. Cit.* Kindle location 2706,

We strongly condemn the practice of rewarding crooks who steal public funds that should be behind bars on the pretext that it is a way of retrieving some part of the national cake for a given ethnic nationality that feel politically or economically marginalized. It is therefore our view that the traditional kinship (patron-client) relationship is in need of deconstruction in itself. While we admit its values for maintaining all forms of social relationships, we also realize that it has in recent times been subjected to an unhealthy hermeneutics with grave consequences for moral development and nation building. The question is how to both retain its inherent values while circumventing its inadequacies. Our approach here is to apply the power of differentiation.

We identified “tribalism” as a contagion in this study to differentiate it from a healthy kinship relationship. While kinship connotes bloodline, it also implies the core extensions of one’s primary affection and trust circle. Tribalism on the other hand is born of fear and distrust. *It is an unhealthy mental mode that distorts how individuals or groups interpret, understand, relate to, and control their world.* It does have very narrow advantages for those who practice it. Though it ensures that instincts necessary for survival of the tribe is developed and retained, it is blind to the broader horizons of reality and “survival” as such. If “survival” is narrowly defined in quantitative rather than qualitative terms, then tribalism may be “rationalized” but can never be “justified”.

We have shown in that last chapter how by destroying social trust, tribalism is able to rupture the most basic fabric of social order. It does not merely distort the proper formation of conscience, but impacts its core function – the capacity for self-transcendence. It also hampers the capacity for true nationhood. In a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria, nationhood can only be possible when the different ethnic communities are able to self-transcend – look beyond their specific “corporate selfhood” and shake hands of fellowship with other tribes to be able to build

a viable nation. Without this willingness to live an authentic “communalism” that every community in Africa boasts about at a deeper and broader level, it will be impossible to formulate a serious national ideology that is important for statecraft. We will all be fishes swimming in our own small streams without the opportunity to experience the big rivers and the seas that our communalism could have flown down to us to enjoy.

We can therefore trace many social ills to it: Chinua Achebe, for instance, admits that “tribalism was endemic”<sup>736</sup> and took pains to point out how this is at the heart of the “Problem with Nigeria” and its symptom in the marginalization of the Igbos. For all their sins, the Igbos remain a gift to Nigeria worth celebrating. Because of their industry and enterprising spirit, many uninhabitable places have been turned into money spinning machines in all parts of the country. They have a habit of making any place they come to their home. They develop it as they live and do business there. If their talents are positively assimilated in Nigeria, they would definitely contribute more to our nation building than any foreign investor program could ever do because there is a certain *positive energy* that *acceptance* gives to a person and a people. Just as African Americans are struggling against all odds of discrimination (essentially being “unaccepted” to a large degree) to survive where fate have planted them, the Igbos are going through the same in Nigeria (perhaps at a less intense level). Given our analysis in chapter two on the psychology of moral development, and given their relative success, imagine what they made of their lives (positive and consider in that light what acceptance (at bottom means love) would do in their lives and that of the nation. The same could be said for the different ethnicities. Each has their

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<sup>736</sup> Achebe, *Morning yet at Near Dawn*, *Loc. Cit.*, p. 83

special talent, which if properly harnessed, would make our country a beautiful kaleidoscope of colors. Is it too late to celebrate our differences and our harness our different energies?

The alternative is tribalism with its pathetic history: monumental corruption, political instability, violence and/or war that results from inability to articulate a deep sense of nationhood; lack of basic infrastructure and/or backwardness, hunger, chronic disease, and poverty together give birth to a dependency culture that has made Africa a beggarly spectacle, a pure caricature of her inherent wealth and dignity, that the world is forced to behold pitifully displayed on news media daily. These are but some of the devastating effects of tribalism in most nations of Africa. Nigeria, the so-called “giant of Africa,” is a monumental disgrace to all indices of what constitutes nation building, no thanks to tribalism. It is for this reason that we insist that if we are to make any serious progress in overcoming corruption, and take giant strides in nation building, we need to tackle this monster.

Though we admit that a people’s life situation (social circumstances) could influence how they respond to their environment or determine the vices they develop, it is also true that with critical reflection and diligent effort, it could shape their vision and provide opportunity to the virtues they ought to strive for in order to realize that vision. While we admit the significant impact external agents play in the destruction or balkanization of Africa, we do place the full burden of our fate in our own hands. The words of the prophet Hosea, “my people die for lack of knowledge,”<sup>737</sup> fits the Nigerian and African narrative so perfectly that her “enemies of progress” (both internal and external) have exploited this lack to maximum advantage for too long

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<sup>737</sup> Hosea 4:6 *The Holy Bible*, New Revised Standard Version (Hendrickson Publishers, 2008)

precisely because we are too naïve (or ignorant) to see in order to remedy it.<sup>738</sup> From selling our sons and daughters into slavery in exchange for mirrors, whiskey, or handkerchiefs to the looting of our treasury and banking them in foreign lands; from killing sons and daughters for bits of diamonds or gold to the destruction of our ecosystem and arable land because of oil money, we have proved beyond measure that “we die for lack of knowledge.”

Hence, the ambivalence we Nigerians express regarding corruption (we are its greatest critics but also complicit in its practices) only mirrors the mental confusion that results from a debilitating illness. Admittedly, the masses of Nigerians are complicit in corruption often as “victims” of their social conditions (social context). However, in the process of contextualized response, they are evolving an *unhealthy mental mode to rationalize an unhealthy practice instead of evolving a mental mode for mobilizing against a social virus*. If this becomes internalized, “reification” becomes inevitable. This is already occurring at some level given that most Nigerians believe that it is only God that will save the situation.<sup>739</sup> Most seem to have lost the will to fight for the kind of country they desire or deserve. A psychological paralysis is already occurring similar to what the communists achieved with coercive propaganda. Therefore,

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<sup>738</sup> Aimé Césaire captured this in his play, “Uno Saison au Congo,” where he describes the plan B of four expatriate bankers in the Belgian Congo after its independence. One of them explained to his colleagues that he knows these “savages” so well that he knows how to control them post-independence. They understand only pain and flattery. What will they want in the new arrangement? He answers that they will be looking for “rich pickings: they will want to be presidents and members of the parliament, senators and ministers; and they will want credit notes and bank accounts and cars and villas and luxurious living. The basic principle now must be to over-feed the savages, to stuff them full with all the things their greed demand. Then they will become meek and humble of heart, simple to manage. Since we are talking about the representatives of the people, it is they who will persuade the population at large to accede to the proposals of the bankers. So there will be a fruitful conspiracy.” There is hardly anything in those lines that has not come true in post-colonial Africa. It is such a shame to be so predictable. See Aimé Césaire, *Une Saison au Congo*, Paris 1966, cited by Bénézet Bujo, *African Theology In Its Social Context*, *Loc. Cit.*, p. 54

<sup>739</sup> Daniel J. Smith argues that, “Even as Nigerians feel resigned, enticed, trapped, and compelled to participate in their country's ubiquitous corruption, they also feel angry, frustrated, dismayed, and betrayed. See Daniel Smith, ““The Paradoxes of Popular Participation in Corruption in Nigeria,” in *Corruption, Global Security and World Order*, *Op. Cit.* (Kindle Locations 3940-3941)

this unhealthy mental mode is a greater threat than corruption itself and therefore in greater need of rehabilitation. It is essentially tribalism that breeds and maintains this unhealthy mental mode. Tribalism, as “institutionalized self-interest,”<sup>740</sup> and at the detriment of the common good of all, compromises not just the very basis for national unity and a critical factor in nation building, but even more critical is how it compromises the capacity for self-transcendence that we assert as the core attribute of conscience and without which a higher moral consciousness or individual and social transformation becomes a fantasy.

Nevertheless, we are quick to add that survival is the most fundamental human right. Therefore, when people are subjected to live in sub-human conditions while cognizant of the fact that they have the material resources to live a better life, they have little option than to act in such a manner as to “survive the system” than lose their lives. The monumental looting of the treasury in Nigeria (and Africa) that the West has *tacitly* allowed to go on for decades by receiving its proceeds into its coffers based on the calculation that it somehow benefits its economy<sup>741</sup> is not just unconscionable but the greatest atrocity to the suffering people of Nigeria (and Africa). This research insists that the West must have to take *giant steps* to reverse this trend if not for the sake of the suffering peoples of Nigeria and Africa, at least to protect its own touted sense of integrity.

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<sup>740</sup>We argue that any form of institutionalization of self-interest will breakdown the system at some point. For instance, Daniel J. Smith used “Patron-client system” to explain the basic framework of social relationships and assistance in Nigeria (and Africa) that implies “personal interest as intertwined with group interests,” that is now breaking down – giving way to more “individualistic pursuit of wealth and power” See D. J. Smith, “The Paradoxes of Popular Participation in Corruption in Nigeria, in *Corruption, Global Security and World Order*, Op. Cit. Kindle location, 3925.

<sup>741</sup> Rose Ackerman noted that “Some developed countries resist efforts to control corruption because they believe that payoffs in developing countries benefit their own domestic businesses.” See Ackerman, *Corruption and Government*, Op. Cit., p. 177

#### 4.6 SEEKING SOLUTIONS: THEORIES OF SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION

We have identified the level of corruption in Nigeria as systemic rather than incidental. The question is how do we even begin to solve this problem? This section is not concerned with a descriptive analysis of solutions proposed for corruption; we leave that task to economic theorists and social scientists. We are concerned with the deeper but broader picture – the underlying presuppositions of representative theories for eradicating systemic or even incidental corruption. Authors, particularly from the field of economics and social sciences have proposed a variety of solutions that we condense here under the following headings:

***Gradualism:*** This is an incremental approach to reform - a gradual but consistent incremental institutional reform based on the assumption that consistency is the best guarantee for overcoming systemic corruption.<sup>742</sup> Though this remains perhaps the most common approach to systemic corruption, yet it begs the question because it is predicated on the assumption of guarantee of consistency precisely the lack of which is what makes systemic corruption so endemic. What is rather guaranteed is that systemic corruption will overtake any institutional reform that is introduced no matter how gradual since there is no possibility of quarantining the different anti-corruption agents in the same system. It is therefore a measure that may have some short-term advantages but with no guarantee of sustainability over the long term. However, there is a hope that partial changes could evolve into a full scale reform when new allies are added and grows into a critical mass of people who desire the dividends of a more effective system.<sup>743</sup>

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<sup>742</sup> See Michael Johnstone, *Syndromes of Corruption: Wealth, Power, and Democracy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp.198-208. See also “Fighting Systemic Corruption: Social Foundations for Institutional Reform,” Online paper (fall):1997.

<sup>743</sup> See Rose Ackerman, *Corruption and Government*, *Op. Cit.* p. 220.



*The Big Bang*: Rothstein argues for a “big-bang” approach to corruption. He rejects gradualism above or any such incremental approach as wasteful – for it only succeeds in wasting resources given the fact that most anti-corruption agents are normally “bought-over” by the system. He therefore prefers waiting until one can deal with it and “bang” out the bad guys.<sup>744</sup> In other words, times of crisis or revolutionary changes provide opportunity for changing the rules of engagement instead of business as usual. Evidently, the “big bang” theory is practicable in dictatorships and revolutionary governments. Military dictatorships with *good revolutionary intent* can clean the Aegean stable and provide a relief and deterrence for corruption.

A close example of the “big-bang” approach is what happened in Ghana in 1979 following the military coup that brought Jerry Rawlings to power. The Ghanaian Armed forces Revolutionary Council under General Rawlings (AFRC) “carried out a much wider ‘house-cleaning-exercise’ aimed at purging the armed forces and society at large of corruption and graft as well as restoring a sense of moral responsibility and accountability in public life.”<sup>745</sup> It is arguable that this “purging” as a psycho-social event succeeded in establishing probity and public accountability in Ghana that it still reaps its dividends today. Many Nigerians express similar aspirations for the “Rawlings method” as solutions to Nigerian corruption. This explains the feelings of nostalgia and regret Nigerians often express for the times of General Murtala Mohammed in whom they see a revolutionary leader with a vision for a corruption-free Nigeria but was short-lived because he was overthrown in a coup that many believe was externally orchestrated.

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<sup>744</sup> See Rothstein, “Anti-Corruption – The Big Bang,” in A Q & G Working Paper Series, 2007:3, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1338614>

<sup>745</sup> See online profile of General Jerry Rawlings, <http://www.jjrawlings.info/about.html>

Though the “big-bang” solution to corruption is deemed impracticable in a democratic arrangement (except you have an exceptionally strong leader with a sterling moral quality),<sup>746</sup> but it becomes an inevitable or an increasingly attractive option when the political class consistently fails in their duty to ensure that the masses reap the dividends of governance. It therefore remains a possible option in Nigeria. But it is not a determinable option because you do not know what the “revolutionaries” will turn out to be when they assume the mantle of power. This is the greatest problem the world faces with the aftermaths of the “Arab Spring” when the “bad guys” were banged out. But this is always the danger inherent in manipulating socio-political outcomes solely for private interests and at the detriment of justice and fairness. It has a costly price tag.

***Targeted Gradualism:*** Rose Ackerman advocates a “middle range” incremental approach that seems to admit the insights from both the “big-bang” approach and “gradualism”. It targets specific sectors of socio-political institutions with focus on government accountability. The same critic for gradualism is relevant here as well. However, like gradualism, it has some short-term advantages that have the potential for incentivizing a more extensive reform. In the case of Nigeria, and Africa, she particularly provides us a window into the role of the international community in the fight against corruption that converges with our position that includes “asset recovery” and “capacity building” as its key elements. She admits that though asset recovery has recently become part of United Nations treaty, she argues that “*one key require element is to*

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<sup>746</sup> Except in cases like what happened in Susurluk, Turkey that illumined the complicity of highest government officials in corruption and resulted in a change of government. A car accident on November 3, 1996 in that country revealed the victims as the police chief, a member of parliament, an international criminal by name Mehmet Ozbay (alias Abdullah Catl) wanted by Interpol, he was carrying an identity card signed by the interior Minister, the trunk was full of dollars and weapons, and the occupants pockets were filled with cocaine. See Ezel Akay, “A Call to End Corruption: One Minute of Darkness for Constant Light: New Tactics in Human Rights.” [www.newtactics.org](http://www.newtactics.org)

*make corruption a predicate offense to the application of money laundering requirements.*”<sup>747</sup>

We cannot agree more with her! Some of her recommendations include insisting on the need to make the burden of recovery of corrupt assets to the host country less difficult citing instances of Congo, Nigeria, and Kenya (all in Africa).<sup>748</sup>

We think that if the international community could adhere strictly to merely these two counsels, reform in Nigeria (and Africa) will take an unbelievably new positive turn. It will be the equivalent of our own “big-bang” moment that reverberates through the entire system triggering ripple effects capable of unraveling the entire system of corruption. But perhaps this in itself is the greatest fear of the West that paralyzes it from acting even in its *own traditional interests* of maintaining any condition that enables free flow of raw materials to the West. But they forget that failed States are nobody’s gain. Nigeria particularly is teetering on the edge of a possible revolution. A *deliberate reform* targeted at government accountability that includes retrieval of a good measure of what was looted would provide a strong buffer to possible *unregulated reform* (or violent uprising). It is delusive to think *African Spring* will never happen. The time of opportunity to regain African trust is now. The window is robust asset recovery.

Ackerman’s proposal includes considering the “underlying institutions and habits of behavior that make corruption endemic in some countries...”<sup>749</sup> Apart from providing the impetus for our research, we particularly stress the highly probable impact of asset recovery as

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<sup>747</sup> See Rose Ackerman, “The Challenge of Poor Governance and Corruption,” *Copenhagen Consensus2004*, p. 37.

<sup>748</sup> Susan Rose-Ackerman, “The Challenge of Poor Governance and Corruption,” *Copenhagen Consensus2004*, p. 37. <http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/Default.aspx?ID=225>. See also *Corruption and Government*, 1999, pp.177-197.

<sup>749</sup> Ackerman, “The Challenge of Poor Governance and Corruption,” *Ibid.* p. 15

part of any serious reform initiative. Asset recovery is crucial not only because its loss is responsible for the impoverishment of Nigerians despite their oil wealth and a critical factor not just in reinforcing corruption within the political leadership, but even more pertinent is that it breeds and feeds a negative perception about the West as the source of their woes and the consequent criminal trends that emerges from this mindset as evident in Nigeria e-mail scams and other failed or tittering states in Africa.<sup>750</sup> Turning around this mindset is achievable with a robust effort by the West to track and return Nigerian (and African loot). It will establish a heart-felt accord with the individual Nigerians (and Africans) that has the potential to turn them into vanguards against Western scam artists and those who wish to do them harm. It is the single possible act that has the potential to positively rejuvenate Western image in Africa since the slave trade, colonization, and the ills accompanying its scramble for her natural resources and the recent revival of land grabbing quests by Western interests in Africa mentioned below.

Moreover, asset recovery will be more effective than aids because it will be a symbol of justice and truth as well as a powerful incentive for further accountability and reform. We have consistently argued in line with H. R. Niebuhr that we humans are “responders” to what is done to us. If the West will dedicate the same resources and zeal to locating and returning Nigerian

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<sup>750</sup> General Michael Mukasey, US Attorney General said in April 2008 offered a grim assessment of the rising threat of global criminals affirming that they are “more sophisticated, they are richer, they have greater influence over government and political institutions worldwide ... and [they] are far more involved in our everyday lives than many people appreciate.... [Consequently], we can't ignore criminal syndicates in other countries on the naive assumption that they are a danger only in their homeland, whether it is located in Eurasia, Africa, or anywhere else.” Kelly M. Greenhill, “Kleptocratic Interdependence: Trafficking, Corruption, and the Marriage of Politics and Illicit Profits,” in *Corruption, Global Security, and World Order* edited by Robert I. Rotberg. (Kindle Locations 1332-1333). Kindle Edition. We need to keep stressing the fact that the international community can no longer afford to think that what happens to Africa does not affect it. There is no rational basis for holding to this script any longer. The more impoverished the nations of Africa become, the more creative elements within it will try to reinvent themselves in an attempt to survive. And all options will likely be on the table. Somalia home-bred piracy is a good example. A failed Nigeria will be a global nightmare, but knowing that a transformed Nigeria means a more robust economy that will benefit all parties in the global community should provide additional incentive for a concerted effort by the West to insist on reform against corruption in Nigeria.

and African loot in Western Banks and economy equivalent to what they dedicate to money laundering from the West into Africa (or drug trafficking), it will not only result in monumental reform in governance in Africa but will yield huge positive political dividends in the relationship between the West and African nations far into the future. The reason is simple: it will change the prevalent negative perception of Westerners as “looters” and “polluters” of Africa to a more positive perception and nomenclature. The significance of this is beyond measure. It is in this light that these words of David Cameron at the G8 Economic summit sound refreshing if given teeth and effective implementation:

[A] few years back a transparency initiative exposed a huge black hole in Nigeria’s finances – an \$800 million discrepancy between companies’ payments and government’s receipts for oil. This is leading to new regulation of Nigeria’s oil sector – so the richness of the earth can actually enrich the people of that country. And the potential is staggering.... ***So we’re going to push for more transparency on who owns companies, on who’s buying up land and for what purpose, on how governments spend their money, on how gas, oil and mining companies operate, on who is hiding stolen assets and how we recover and return them.***<sup>751</sup>

If these words are followed by concrete actions “targeted” at *identifying* and *returning* Nigerian loots that are currently in Western Banks or *liquidating* properties and businesses that are in circulation financed through these loots and returning its proceeds to the people of Nigeria; and ensuring that Nigerian and African loots no longer find easy access to their economy, then the West would have helped initiating a *deliberate targeted reform* that this research argues as a critical element in tackling systemic corruption in Nigeria in particular and Africa as a whole.

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<sup>751</sup> See <http://economicconfidential.net/new/news/national-news/1235-n108-trillion-2012-revenues-where-is-the-evidence>

Therefore the recent trial and imprisonment of former Nigerian Governor Ibori in London is a worthy effort in this direction. A similar follow up in the U.S.A with its forfeiture ruling against the former governor Alamiyeseigha of Bayelsa state of Nigeria is encouraging because of recent collaboration between Nigeria and the U.S.A that includes the return of “looted funds” as a predicate offense to money laundering legal initiatives. Obviously these two cases represent but a tip of the iceberg of looted Nigerian funds currently abroad, but it is a very good start that needs to be lauded and sustained.

Susan Ackerman made some general recommendations for curbing systemic corruption that specifies and differentiates the roles of the international community from that of the local community (or domestic government). The role of the international community, apart from what we have noted above, includes but not limited to making anti-corruption reform a condition for international aid policy; a closer monitoring of how effectively loans or grants are utilized; ensuring that multinational companies desist from paying bribes and enlisting them in any reform program given their enormous leverage with governments; and establishing new international institutions focused on fighting corruption.<sup>752</sup>

Her recommendations for the local community include: political structural reform; she argues that “scandal and crisis” (political and/or economic) could provide an opportunity for reform; that the size of government or growth in private sector may increase demands for reform;<sup>753</sup> and sustaining reform could be ensured by compensating those likely affected it (which may include

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<sup>752</sup> For details of how this could be done see Ackerman, *Corruption and Government, Op. Cit.*, pp. 179-197

<sup>753</sup> She argues that when the government is large in absolute size but small in relation to the private sector, reform might occur since both the government employees are unafraid of getting jobs elsewhere and private businesses that do not depend on government funding to the degree that they would block reform agenda. See Ackerman, *Ibid*, p. 219.

“golden handshakes”), offering legal incentive bonuses, severance payments, and assistance in changing jobs or retraining costs for getting jobs in the private sector, restructuring and deregulation. These are possible constitutive elements of a reform program.<sup>754</sup> She therefore advocates a form of “partial reform” that could begin in cities and spillover to other places as such programs become popular. There is a possibility that such popular programs could become institutionalized over time and therefore difficult to reverse. She rejects the idea of creating “enclaves” of integrity where government quarantines some sectors and excludes them from normal rules such that they could concentrate on developing a model.

She argues that the problem with “enclave” approach in fighting systemic corruption is the disaffection it creates and the fact that it cannot be sustained in a new government that does not support it. Moreover, adopting economic liberalization without first establishing political and legal restructuring could result in blocking of reform by those who benefited in the first reform effort from the selling of state assets. This maybe the case in Nigeria today given that President Obasanjo’s regime privatized State assets that some argue only benefited himself, his friends and cronies. He is accused of having handpicked and installed a weak leaders to succeed him as a smart strategy that allows him maintain a proxy hold on power in order to protect his interests. From this viewpoint, it is highly probable that he can only support a cosmetic form of anti-corruption reform.<sup>755</sup> Ackerman however insists that reform is made easier if supported from

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<sup>754</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220

<sup>755</sup> Reports have shown that any investigation by the current administration that reaches to the point it implicates the former president Obasanjo ceases to proceed. Recently members of his own inner caucus went to press to make some demining revelations of his deals while in government to the global media. These are yet to be investigated and confirmed by the Nigerian government but if we judge from hindsight, there may never be. See <http://saharareporters.com/report/transcript-photos-documents-atrocities-former-president-obasanjo-confessions-aso-rock-insider>

both the local and international community based on the premise that reduced corruption and patronage will benefit all in the long run.<sup>756</sup>

The above views on reform is shared by Ngozi Okonjo-Iwuala who is currently heading the taskforce saddled with meeting the 2015 millennium goals for the current administration in Nigeria. To her credit, she made giant strides in her capacity as finance minister in Obasanjo's regime (1999-2007) by spearheading the paying off of our foreign loans (albeit much controversy), and is currently charged with ensuring fiscal discipline in government. It will be interesting to see how she will ensure not only that the bloated cost of running government is reduced, but that diligent oversight is maintained over the funds her office disburses to the three tiers of government and that the different government organs that have evolved a corrupt tradition for withholding billions of naira in revenue they generate pay their dues to the State.

She outlines some of her efforts in the last regime (supported by Obasanjo during his presidency) to institute fiscal discipline and ensure proper management of oil funds. Such efforts includes setting up the oil price-based fiscal rule (OPFR) that enables the government to conserve funds and offset the high volatility of an economy wholly based oil price and exports (96 percent of Nigerian GDP depends on oil revenue and its related products or services). She helped establish for the first time in Nigerian history the Excess Crude Account (ECA) that made it possible to save about \$46 billion dollars in foreign reserve by 2006 even after paying \$12billion to cancel its foreign debts. Some have accused the present government to which she is an important part (particularly Obiageli Ezekwesili, a minister charged with "due process" in Obasanjo's administration) of serious mismanagement worthy of an independent investigation to

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<sup>756</sup> Ackerman, *Corruption and Government*, p. 222



uncover why seven years after (2006-2013) our foreign reserve still remains a paltry \$48billion compared to its peak of \$60billion in 2008 as claimed by Okonjo-Iwuala.<sup>757</sup>

She however must be credited with the major shift in fiscal policy since her participation in governance. She was responsible for incorporating the Policy Support Initiative (PSI) program of IMF as part of the mechanism to institutionalize both the OPFR in the long run and broader range of fiscal and monetary policies aimed at stability in the medium term. To her credit, she helped craft the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA) that was signed into law in 2007 that helped cement some of the macro economic reforms she initiated. A commission was set up to ensure its stipulations are monitored and effectively implemented.<sup>758</sup> She introduced similar fiscal discipline in the Budget office, publishing for the first time budgetary allocations to the three tiers of government, and oversaw the liberalization of important sectors of the economy (privatizing of public assets).

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<sup>757</sup> <http://premiumtimesng.com/news/123672-nigerian-government-distorting-facts-on-foreign-reserves-to-confuse-citizens-says-ezekwesili.html> See also Okonjo-Iwuala, *Reforming the Unreformable, Op. Cit.* Kindle edition (Kindle Location 2365)

<sup>758</sup> She explains this Fiscal Responsibility Act further: “The framework commits all tiers of government to a set of rules for efficient economic management and set standards for the planning and control of public revenue and expenditure. By providing a debt-management framework and conditions for borrowing, including aiming for concessionality of borrowed funds, it seeks to ensure that government will not borrow and spend money without ensuring that it has the necessary funds to service debt. It sets general targets and limits for selected fiscal indicators for the country, with specific sanctions for noncompliance, such as sanctioning the finance minister. The framework provides the basis for the annual budget and allocates resources to strategic priorities among and within sectors. It aims to ensure that annual revenue and expenditure estimates are consistent with its provisions through rules on cost and its control, budget execution and achievement of targets, and evaluation of program results. The Act also aims at promoting transparency and reporting standards by facilitating parliamentary and public scrutiny of economic and monetary information and plans. It establishes the Fiscal Responsibility Commission to ensure that the provisions of the Act are properly followed through. The Commission is designed with the authority to compel any person and government institution to disclose information related to public revenues and expenditure. It can also initiate investigations on violations of the provisions of the Act and forward the investigation report to the appropriate authorities for possible prosecution. See Ngozi Okonjo-Iwuala, *Reforming the Unreformable, Op. Cit.* Kindle edition (Kindle Location, 552-557)

There is no doubt that her actions as finance minister brought significant relief and credibility to Nigerian economy. The question that looms large is how sustainable are the measures she introduced? Given that she has been given a second chance by the present government to continue with her economic development and reform agenda, how could one assess the effectiveness or sustainability of same in the face of systemic corruption? Time will determine this. Okonjo-Iwuala remains a controversial figure primarily because she stirred the hornet's nest and both patrons and rent-seekers having been fighting back. She constituted part of the "enclave" arrangement of the last regime that ensured that her salary was equivalent to her salary as Vice president of the world-bank, a job she relinquished to serve the country. She claimed that her salary was paid from a consolidated fund abroad and not necessarily by the country. In the present dispensation, she was at the center of *fuel subsidy* removal (recent investigation uncovered a massive scam we noted earlier in this chapter), that spurred mass discontent and increased the suffering of the average Nigerian as a consequence of over 200% increase in cost of transportation with an attendant jump in the general cost of living.

The Minister is yet to explain to Nigerians why our refineries continue to represent a national symbol of corruption. Nigeria's four refineries are unable to produce 25% of its functional capacity so as to enable importation of "fuel" at a huge cost that provides equally huge profit that its patrons (often heads of government and their cronies) collect as rent.<sup>759</sup> This situation remains an embarrassment for a finance minister of the caliber of Okonjo-Iwuala.

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<sup>759</sup> Obasanjo held the Oil portfolio (minister of State for oil) for some years during his tenure and it is alleged that his family were in charge of fuel importation. See, Rotimi T. Suberu, "The Travails of Nigeria Anti-Corruption Crusade," in *Corruption, Global Security, and World Order*, R.I Rotberg, ed. Kindle edition; See also the interview revelations of Odunsanya and Seriki, <http://saharareporters.com/report/transcript-photos-documents-atrocities-former-president-obasanjo-confessions-aso-rock-insider>

Recent investigation into Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) indicates it remains the supreme symbol of corruption.<sup>760</sup> Another is Ajaokuta Steel Mill where over \$5 billion has been sunk without any steel to show for it. It was then privatized to an Indian company in 2007 at a paltry sum who then stripped its pricey components, shipped it overseas and returned it to the government after 5,000 employees have been lost. In the meantime the same company was given 80% share of Delta Steel valued at \$1.5billion at \$30 million. The bigger problem is not merely the corruption in the privatization process that is well documented, but the fact that many of these privatized companies are no longer functioning creating serious job problems.<sup>761</sup>

Rotimi T. Suberu considers targeting the political institutionalization of corruption as the proximate measure to curb corruption in Nigeria. He however did not propose any solutions apart from that offered by *The Anti-corruption Reforms Committee (2005)* which report recommended among other things:

[T]he publication of public officer's declaration of assets, the removal of the constitutional immunity for political chief executives, the nomination of members of anti-corruption agencies by civil society groups (Nigeria Labor Congress, Nigerian Bar Association, Institute of Chartered Accountants, Academic Staff Union of Universities, etc.), the coordination and harmonization of the activities of the anti-corruption agencies as well as provisions for their adequate funding, and the streamlining and facilitation of current processes for the litigation and adjudication of corruption offences. Along with electoral reforms, through the political insulation of the electoral administration, which should be modeled after the country's relatively independent judiciary, these institutional reform measures can help to restrain and reverse the malaise of political corruption that plagues Nigeria.<sup>762</sup>

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<sup>760</sup> See the Draft Report of Petroleum Revenue Special Task Force (PRSTF) of August, 2012, that shows incredible loopholes in production and management services, gross inefficiency, poor oversight, and irreconcilable discrepancies in production and sales data of oil and related products. <http://saharareporters.com/sites/default/files/ribadu-report.pdf>

<sup>761</sup> See Mercy A Odey, "Privatization of Public Enterprises and Productivity: Nigeria's Dilemma," in *Journal of Emerging Trends in Economic and Management Sciences (JETEMS)* 2(6):490-496

<sup>762</sup> Rotimi T. Suberu, "The Travails of Nigeria Anti-Corruption Crusade," in *Corruption, Global Security, and World Order*, R.I Rotberg, ed. Kindle edition (Kindle Locations 3845-3847)

We acknowledge the importance of the foregoing proposals for fighting systemic corruption either globally or specifically in the Nigeria. However, there is overwhelming evidence that the Nigerian situation is so endemic that it cannot be done with quick fixes. The rot is so deep that so many who currently feed fat on rent that corruption provides will ensure that any effort to institutionalize “due process” fails. Nevertheless, the reform efforts of the last two administrations (Olusegun Obasanjo and Shehu Yar’dua) and the present one (Jonathan Goodluck) have, above all else, brought the issue of corruption to national consciousness. The signing of the “freedom of information” into law is a critical contribution of the present administration to that “process” that leads to the national transformation Nigeria needs.

Investigative journalism and constant media attention to “facts” of corruption in the system are critical factors in fighting the monster of corruption. There are few serious journalists that are beginning to do this. The media engages the public in a debate regarding their responsibility to hold their leaders accountable. There are anti-corruption agencies springing up in the country. These activists are building social networks and coalitions that Nigerian political elites are not used to seeing. Gradually the masses are being “mobilized” to do something about corruption instead of complete passivity towards this problem. Ultimately, it is going to be the people that will compel accountability from the leadership.

However, knowing the complexity of the Nigerian situation as described from the last chapter, we know that a more holistic approach to corruption should include ground networks for basic reorientation of pathological mental attitudes. We have noted how *tribalism* feeds nepotism and cronyism that we have argued as the fulcrum upon which corruption revolves in Nigeria.

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There will hardly be any dent on the mental attitude that spurs corruption in Nigeria without a systematic dismantling of tribal sentiments. This will take time to achieve but it ought to constitute a core component of a long-term strategy towards eradicating corruption in Nigeria. At the core of this strategy is a recovery of conscience. It is our view that a recovery of conscience, synonymous with reawakening a people's "moral consciousness" would involve a degree of reconstruction of certain traditional views of morality that present contexts have deformed. This will be part of our specific recommendations in our final chapter.

#### 4.7. MORAL ATMOSPHERE, CONSCIENCE AND SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION

In Chapter One we highlighted the insight of Aristotle who considers "self-indulgence" as identical with "wickedness" in those instances where one's choices affect others. In his view, incontinence is better than self-indulgence because while it is possible for the incontinent to repent and change, the self-indulgent is obstinate and hardly will change.<sup>763</sup> We are not so much concerned here with the *self-indulgent* politicians and corrupt public servants who are highly improbable candidates for change except compelled to do so by force of external sanctions (legal remedies). Rather, we are concerned with the greater majority of Nigerians who are exposed to the influence of a corrosive moral atmosphere that the actions of these venal and self-indulgent leadership leave behind with serious consequences for the overall moral development of the

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<sup>763</sup> According to him, "Every wicked man is ignorant of what he ought to do and what he ought to abstain from, and it is by reason of error of this kind that men become unjust and in general bad; but the term 'involuntary' tend to be used not if a man is ignorant of what is to his advantage – for it is not mistaken purpose that causes involuntary action (it leads to wickedness), nor ignorance of the universal (for that men are blamed), but ignorance of particulars, i.e. of the circumstances of the action and the objects with which it is concerned. For it is on these that both pity and pardon depend, since the person who is ignorant of any of these acts involuntarily" See Aristotle, *NE, Book III Chapter 1*, 1110b:25-30

different peoples of Nigeria. We are concerned above all with young Nigerians and generation yet unborn who stand the greater risk of being negatively influenced by the trajectory of our moral evolution.

We have argued that tribalism, through a *manipulative* or *unhealthy use of kin solidarity*, in the specific form of covert or overt approval of “corrupt practices,”<sup>764</sup> pollutes the moral atmosphere such that individuals perceive corruption as “normal” and a “rewarding” conduct that reinforces not just corruption but the quest to make money by all means given the uncritical reward and accolade it receives in the community. Aluko’s analysis on the “socialization of corruption” is insightful yet fails to provide sufficient depth and clarity to the problematic.<sup>765</sup> We have tried in this research to provide the background to understand the impact of this “socialization” in the moral orientation of those exposed to it. Its impact is not only an ongoing *moral desensitization* or “de-moralization” but essentially a de-formation of moral consciences that will impact both present and future generations of Nigerians (and Africans) similar to what happened in the deep south of United States regarding slavery and segregation. After many years, some still believe in the moral rightness of slavery and segregation precisely because of progressive deformation of conscience that effectively beclouds reason and became the platform for justifying all forms of atrocities against blacks.

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<sup>764</sup> It is common knowledge that chiefs of local communities give titles to manifestly corrupt personages in society to curry favor; local musicians sing their praises, and their kinsmen defend them against other clans or tribes in local communities. This point is implied by U. J. Njoku in “Colonial Political Re-engineering and the Genesis of Modern Corruption in African Public Service,” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 14 (1):99-116 (2005): 107; Affirmed by Emeka G. Ekwuru, *The Pangs of an African Culture in Travail* (Owerri, Totan Publishers, 1999), p.77.

<sup>765</sup> M.A.O Aluko, “The Institutionalization of Corruption and Its Impact on Political Culture and Behavior in Nigeria,” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 11(3):393-402 (2002).

We have specifically identified *tribalism*<sup>766</sup> (a localized form of *institutionalized self-interest*) from among a host of “cultural pathologies” (like cronyism, xenophobia, superstitious mentality or fetishism, chronic materialism, among others), as not only feeding these ancillary pathologies or vices, but as a primary mental mode that allows a tacit approval of immoral conduct that then impacts negatively on conscience and character development over time. Tribalism, by creating a “system of distrust” instills a moral dysfunction into the very mechanism of social relationships that eventually impacts every aspect of socio-political and economic life. We have consistently argued that constant “distrust” that tribalism engenders constitutes the primary feeder for corrupt practices in Nigeria but even more fundamentally facilitates the progressive erosion of the traditional system of moral formation (a system of shame and guilt) that further reinforces corruption.<sup>767</sup>

One of the most troubling aspects of seeking remedies for corruption in Nigeria is a growing *lack of a sense of shame or guilt* among the political elite. This signals a deeper problem. If they destroy the psycho-social reality we call “the sense of shame” they would effectively destroy the very fabric of moral decency. This they have already begun by recent events like “celebrating” their “colleagues” that were released from prison for stealing public funds; by granting presidential “pardon” to another “colleague” that just served time, in order to

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<sup>766</sup> Kin solidarity is an instinctual behavior adapted for the survival of each species (“strength in numbers”). As such, it has a basic positive element. However, “tribalism” is a specific aspect of kin solidarity that is not morally indifferent. We characterize “tribalism” here in its negative aspect (when it rationalizes bad conduct).

<sup>767</sup> Jerome Kagan and other behavioral scientists inform us that two independent processes contribute to the construction of ideals in child development: “First, children note which characteristics are praised by their community and infer the more perfect forms of those characteristics as well as the perfect forms of features that are the opposite of those criticized.” Second is an appreciation of the difficulty involved in attaining that desirable quality such that those who attain them become idealized. Imagine then what happens when corruption is tacitly “idealized”. See “Morality and its Development,” p. 302.

“rehabilitate” his political ambition; a sitting president (Obasanjo) ensured that a criminal in jail (Omisore) “won” a senatorial election from jail!. They are either deliberately or inadvertently *rewriting* the moral codes that held our society (or any society for that matter) together, but instead of healthy moral pills they are “capsuling” moral poison. A society should never allow its sense of shame to be eroded. It explains why our leaders seem unashamed that Africa remains “beggarly and miserable” continent in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We reaffirm that it is precisely by a covert or overt approval of immoral conduct that a community gradually loses not only its sense of shame but also its moral voice.<sup>768</sup> Accommodating this mindset is a recipe for a state of anomie; but even more disturbing is that there is no way to adequately measure its future social and moral consequences.

If, as we argued in Chapter three, that conscience is the *original memory* of the “good” and “true” linking each individual to the ideal community, in a globalizing world where all borders are crumbling, a *communal memory* of what constitutes the essentials of our humanness underscores our common destiny such that delineating common values for the global community becomes less cumbersome. We do not need to further complexify what constitutes a universal or global “good”. Building a *corruption-free-governmental-system* is a “common good” that all Nigerians and rational humans everywhere will consider a self-evident truth. While Nigerians must spearhead this effort, we cannot do this alone. Therefore, Nigerians (and Africans) need

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<sup>768</sup> The loss of “moral voice” describes the inability of a given cultural collectivity to regulate basic standards of “moral conduct” given the specific variables of that culture (e.g. ethnic and linguistic differences, ideological divides, tribal sentiments, and religious pluralism). The most recent instance of a direct result of this loss of the “voice” of a given moral community was the global economic meltdown that started with sub-prime mortgage crises in the United States – the root cause of which was “unregulated” individual and corporate greed on a grand scale. While the loss of moral voice in African communities could be attributable to a persistent lack of an adequate, indigenous, coherent and consistent system of moral valuation or philosophy, Europe and North America are arguably losing theirs as a result of the corruption of an existing system of moral valuation and/or ideology reducible to the insidious but powerful influence of one: moral relativism. In both cases however, the problem is *internal*.



external help to combat its very corrupt political elite that seem bent on destroying all possibility of building a decent society and thereby threatening global security. Nigeria needs to be rescued from those who must do it harm for the sake of global peace and security.

Furthermore, in a fast globalizing world, nationhood is already being redefined as more people buy-into the idea of “global commons.” It is not merely the fact that many people are now having dual citizenship, but that a good number of people are beginning to lose their sense of national imagery to a global one. So, it is a matter of time when it will no longer be sacrosanct to reconsider the idea of “sovereignty” in a world with collapsing borders. While this seems to pose a real danger to weaker countries, especially in the third world, a more positive and proactive approach to such a possibility is to begin now to access the privileges that a globalizing world already offers. For instance, a global institution like the UN could be more proactive in its approach in assisting weak, poor, and broken nations to stabilize. Its millennium goal of “poverty eradication by 2015 is a laudable proactive effort if diligently implemented. It was long overdue and it could do more. The “Marshall plan” put in place to rebuild Germany after the WWII put it on a sound footing to rise to become the second largest economy in the world today. We wonder if the reality of suffering in African has not deserved a similar proactive measure –especially considering the historical context of the African dilemma.

So instead of the gory images of starving faces of African children that has only numbed peoples’ sensibilities due to repetitive effects, is it not possible for the global North to be more proactive and put together a plan that targets one nation of Africa for a massive reconstruction as a model that could challenge the latent potentialities for achieving greatness in many African countries and leaders (including Nigeria)? At the very least, we think that a more robust effort at

building capacities for good governance is an area the global North could play a major role in rebuilding Africa after the pillage.

Given the preponderance of venal leadership as the bane of African problems, we argue that a stringent international policy that is capable of “forcing” proven corrupt leaders to not only retribute but pay for their crimes (that includes psychological, socio-political and economic rape) once their case is proven. In other words, we recommend making extraordinary looting of a nation’s treasury an international crime equivalent to “crimes against humanity” that should be handled at the World court. This will have three major values: First, it will force these venal leaders to stop their impunity knowing that they could be held to account one day. Secondly, it will create a new mentality in those countries that its masses are paralyzed into inaction to have recourse to a higher authority for redress. These leaders act with impunity because they have devised a “political culture” that ensures they are never held accountable in their own country for their atrocities. They subtly protect themselves from prosecution in and out of office. Thirdly, and perhaps most important of all, it helps uphold and maintain a vestige of “objective standards” that saves both the annihilation of local moral codes and the formation of conscience. It is in the same light of the symbiotic relationship between all nations that globalization only makes self-evident, that we have identified a robust effort towards asset recovery as a critical element in any serious reform effort. We argue that it could have a “big bang” effects that could not only propel serious changes in Nigeria (and Africa) but is capable of redefining mental attitudes towards not only corruption but towards the West as inexorably complicit in the African plight. In addition to the above recommendations (including the five point recommendations of

Ackerman we outlined earlier), we particularly request a *tactically enforced*<sup>769</sup> “elevated degree” of pressure against corruption on Nigerian leadership from countries that have considerable influence and interest in Nigeria particularly United States and Britain. We think that given the historical socio-political and economic affinities that these nations share, and the dangers inherent in a stateless Nigeria, constitutes a *moral obligation* that these two in particular, and the larger international community in general, should have towards Nigeria (and Africa) in assisting with *internal reform* aimed at overcoming a very serious problematic.<sup>770</sup> It is wise to spend some political capital now as a proactive measure than billions of dollars later in a reactionary effort.

## CONCLUSION

We have examined the notion and nature of corruption and differentiated *systemic* from *incidental* corruption. We provided a working definition of corruption and adopted a functional description of systemic corruption. We insisted on a definition that is not morally neutral but one that engages the individual as a moral person (agent), one whose actions define his/her character. Our analysis of corruption in Nigeria indicates that it fits squarely any rational understanding of a country plagued by systemic corruption.

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<sup>769</sup> There are levers these two countries have (particularly the United States) in the affairs of Nigeria that could be brought to bear on this issue. We are inclined to think that once these countries consider overcoming massive corruption as a priority agenda of their foreign policy with Nigeria and Africa, the leadership of Nigeria (and Africa) will feel the heat because these nations will be ready (to invest political capital in it) to use all the “tools” in their disposal to achieve these ends similar to what they do in protecting their “national interests” in foreign countries.

<sup>770</sup> Bishop Desmond Tutu words call attention to the need to be for “cosmic embrace” to lend ourselves to forces of renewal and recreation everywhere: “There is a movement, not easily discernible, at the heart of things to reverse the awful centrifugal force of alienation, brokenness, division, hostility, and disharmony. God has set in motion a centripetal process, a moving toward the center, toward unity, harmony, goodness, peace and justice, a process that removes barriers. Jesus says, 'And when I am lifted up from the earth I shall draw everyone to myself' as he hangs from His cross with out-flung arms, thrown out to clasp all, everyone, and everything, in a cosmic embrace, so that all, everyone, everything, belongs.” Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, p. 265.

Our effort to understand the roots of corruption in Nigeria extends beyond identifying merely a venal political class to underscore how tribalism has enabled “a structure of sin” that both feeds and sustains a “system of corruption”. We argued that it does this by instilling a culture of distrust that disrupts not just the entire foundation of socio-political relationships but ensures the inability to articulate a unifying national philosophy that makes a sense of the “common good” possible. Above all, by fostering distrust, it disables a critical element in the social content of conscience formation which we have argued is a natural mechanism for self-transcendence. Therefore it is in our estimation indirectly responsible for fostering the excessive greed we find in our leadership. Their actions reflect a deep moral vacuum due to the absence of any “shared” sense of the “common good”. This absence then activates a stampede of self-interest we see in looting of the treasury. This absence is a function of distrust that tribalism fosters.. It becomes obvious how conscience, as the original memory of the “good” and the “true”, is distorted by a culture that promotes tribalism in any of its forms.

We underscored how *international “tribalism”* is a correlate (in *intention*), of *local tribalism* for both are forms of “institutionalized self-interest” that have the same objectives and goals – private gains without regard for objective ethical standards. We noted how local corruption in Nigeria (and Africa) is enabled by tribalism and reinforced by its correlative vice. Multinationals and other foreign interests that are complicit in the looting of Nigerian treasury have also become complicit in its effects which include not just hunger and disease that characterize nation states in stasis, but the emergent trends of international crimes like Nigerian e-mail scams, piracy in Somalia, Boko Harm in Nigeria, and other possible terror networks. We argue that any effort to reform must begin with sincere effort in the West to come clean with

their past and adopt a new policy of engagement with the Nations of Africa in particular and the third world in general.

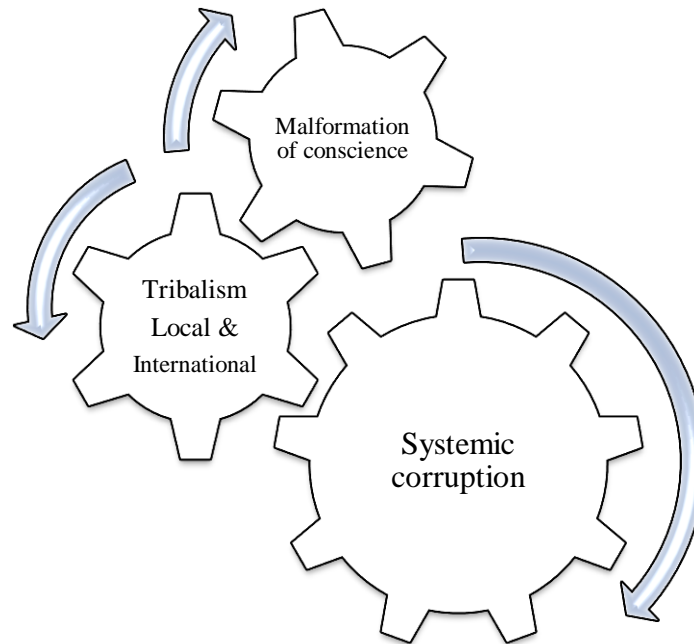
The solutions we propose come partly from the insights gleaned from analysis of three mainline theories of systemic corruption (big bang, gradualism, targeted gradualism).<sup>771</sup> Our real proposal is a more *holistic approach* that accommodates the insights of the above theories and in addition would invest in a robust reorientation effort at the grassroots. The details of this will be elaborated in our concluding chapter (Chapter five). We also underscored the need to prioritize asset recovery and making it a predicate offense to money laundering. We also recommend a new international policy that makes “extraordinary” looting of national treasury (like we have witnessed in Nigeria and other African States) a “crime against humanity” that should be tried at the world court. The value of this has been explained in the preceding section.

Finally, we recommend the appointment of an Ombudsman (internationally and locally). Locally by either the legislature or a group of professional bodies that have not lost all credibility (like the Labor Union, ASU, NUJ, the Bar Association, Association of Chartered Accountants). The ombudsman will have oversight on the executive and administrative organs of government. His task will be to protect the interest of the citizens. He will be independent from the executive but given all the powers to investigate any wrongdoing by the executive and other organs of government.

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<sup>771</sup> These are broad categorizations of mainline theories that take cognizance of “principal-agent theory” and “economics of crime” only in their broader aspects.

### Illustration 3: The Moral “core” drivers of Systemic Corruption<sup>772</sup>



<sup>772</sup> The system of corruption is enabled when *self-interest* becomes *institutionalized* at the local level by virtue of endemic *tribalism*, and further reinforced by external forces coming from interest-driven international organs (international tribalism) as they act on the local community to fulfill their profit-driven agenda (only when acting without adhering to objective standards of moral conduct), they further pollute the moral atmosphere at the local level that in turn deepens the corrosion of the fabric of moral formation (by destroying the basic mechanisms for the formation of conscience) thus spinning endlessly and out of control the wheel of moral decadence we call *systemic corruption*. That this driver is *primary* does not discount the significance of other ancillary drivers (like in the case of Africa, you may add “endemic poverty” that instills a *dependency culture*; lack of a coherent system of philosophy that would have enabled critical thinking on a larger scale; lack of strong socio-political institutions that could have provided the necessary tools for accountability; lack of good education and exposure for a critical mass of people that could have provided a counter weight to the political elite that exploit the ignorance of the masses to act with impunity; an acceptable national language that could have forged the spirit of the different tribes into a unity; and a less sentimental approach to religion that could have purified the mentality of masses of people from the deadly poison of superstition (like a cobweb that entangles its victims) leaving masses of people in the delusion that “God” would solve every problem for them including corruption. The Catholic Church has been praying the “prayer of Nigeria in distress” for years without evident practical steps to fight or remedy it (bishops could have organized a sit-out before the general assembly). Even worse is the belief system that positions of privilege like public office is “God given” and like “divine right of kings,” it comes with “rights” that some interpretive systems would include acting as one pleases in office such that what ordinarily should be considered an “abuse of office” evokes no public outrage (See B. Bujo on the extreme “rights” of kings in Africa, *African Theology in its Social Context, Loc. Cit.*, p. 36). The Igbos say: “*obu chi ya nyere ya*” or “*onye chi ya nyere, ya rie oo!*” (It is god that gave him, whoever his god gave, he should eat!). Note that “chi” is interpreted as lower personal deity, and not necessarily God (Chi-ukwu). It is possible that an inherently flawed *interpretive system* could explain in part the phenomenon of extreme passivity of Nigerian masses in the face of corruption of such monumental proportions as we have witnessed over the years

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CRITICAL SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSION**

### **5.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER**

This final chapter presents a critical summary of the different chapters (chapters 1-4), a general appraisal delineates the critical elements of our research, and our recommendations expose some specific aspects of Nigerian traditions (and could be applicable to other African nations in broader categorization) that need critical review.

Part of our recommendations is grass-root conscientization, which we identify as synonymous with, and integral to conscience re-education and updating. We specifically propose a “three-stage-process” as a methodological tool for this process. We noted that it is refreshing to see that African philosophers and theologians have left behind the stale argument of whether an African philosophy or theology exists or not and are philosophizing and theologizing in their own right. However, we still insist that a systematized philosophy will enhance not just the conceptual tools for African theological reflection but also will improve the overall spectrum of African conceptual differentiation that continue to hamper both a deeper appreciation of African contribution to thought but also its ability to critically evaluate its practices and assumptions. We therefore stress the need for a logical transition from compactly held beliefs and practices largely in oral traditions to a more differentiated categorization.

Finally, we present a synthesis of the more critical aspects of the conclusions of this research that does not overlook the more detailed “recommendations” and/or the specific “conclusions” we reached in the previous chapters.

## 5.1 PART ONE: CRITICAL SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS 1-4

### 5.1.1. CHAPTER ONE: EXPLORING THE ROOTS OF MORAL [IR] RESPONSIBILITY

This chapter provides the background for the entire research. It seeks to understand the roots of moral responsibility and its relation to conscience by exploring different aspects of the problem of “irresponsibility”. It first explores the notion of moral responsibility, follows R.H. Niebuhr in defining it along the lines of moral accountability and/or integrity. The essential nature of moral responsibility is that it “is a response to what is done to us,” and therefore has a natural bearing (or “solidarity”) to the community of moral agents. Our *interpretation* or *perception* of what is done to us influences our response as it anticipates other “responses” and therefore shapes our orientation towards moral responsibility or irresponsibility. It implies we are indeed “our brother’s keeper” for *we influence who others become by what we do*. Another critical aspect of moral integrity is that it is not about mathematical consistency but about taking our moral values seriously such that *wholeness* results – a discernible harmonious relationship between our acts is evident in the same Self. Our analysis of personhood establishes what this “self” represents and its relationship to the moral community.

Though classical philosophers (Plato and Aristotle) did not solve the problem of irresponsibility, their insights are still valid today: While admitting ignorance and weakness of the will as the problem, Aristotle in particular insists on moral agency and that wickedness (achieved by the self-indulgent) is a choice. He argues that it is “senseless” (or irrational) to knowingly, and consistently make bad choices and expect a different result in life or in one’s character. He insists that even if we are inclined to choose the “apparent good” we are still responsible for our actions and the subsequent bad character it engenders since the “end appears



to each person according to his character,” and we are “responsible for our state of mind.” So, instead of admitting to the assumption that we are “determined” he recommends *practice* or *habit* of virtue as the answer to moral irresponsibility, and an important part of this is “moral education” (in agreement with Plato) to impart “knowledge” of specific virtues that needed to be acquired as a necessary step to its practice.

An overview of the philosophical debate on responsibility hinges on human culpability in the face of internal or external constraints. These deterministic arguments (fatalism; causal, scientific, and theological determinism) underscore the value of human freedom without which there cannot be moral responsibility. We agree more with P.F. Strawson that *internal* conditions rather than *external* ones provide justification for holding others morally accountable or responsible. We are “wired” to hold those in relationship with us accountable for their actions. Our “reactive attitudes” (based on “feelings”) are responses to what others have done (he stressed the “great importance we attach to the attitudes and intentions of others”) and how they significantly shape our beliefs, our intentions, and our actions. Through our relationships we influence what others do or who they become – either morally responsible or irresponsible. We create the kind of community we live in by shaping individual “character”.

We explored the notion of person, adopting Pope John Paul II’s viewpoint, to underscore the importance of “morally good action” (the loving act) in conceptualizing personhood. This is significant because it resonates with the essential nature of African view of “person” formulated around social responsibility or fulfilling one’s duty to the primary community. It however also underscores how this complicates the problem of moral responsibility in Africa given the moral ambivalence that current immoral practices obviously instills and fosters. We argue that while

there is an obvious social advantage in African socio-morally based conceptualization of “person” (encapsulated in the phrase, “Because *we are* therefore *I am*”), there is however an ever abiding danger for Africans to subsume the individual in the collective just as there is the danger in the West of treating the person as an “object” or even a worse scenario of exaggerated ‘individualism’ that pretends to claim absolute autonomy from the community. The inadequacies of either approach have serious consequences for morality and social development. However, for the African, there is the additional danger of conceptual incoherence that tends to confuse simply by blurring distinctions. Therefore the need for conceptual clarity regarding our *beliefs, values, norms* and *practices* cannot be overemphasized.

Nevertheless, the significance of John Paul’s view as a point of convergence between Western and African thought in conceptualizing personhood is not lost to us for it captures the essence of what needs retrieving in both traditions. To underscore this point, we reflected on the relationship between personhood, moral and social responsibility. Revisiting the “*I-thou*” relationship enables us to retrieve the insight that the “self” comes to know itself only in the presence of another self and therefore implies the primacy of “relationships” or “community” over the “individual”. Hence, a true sense of “self” is formed from developing “other-regarding-attitudes”. The African view of “selfhood” is again in sync with this Western view because the basis of its morality is about building social relationships that promotes or sustains life (or the “life force”). We highlighted the concept of “ubuntu” as not only encapsulating this view, but represents, perhaps the first African intra-ethnic synonym for “moral responsibility”. It establishes further that the “relationship” factor *in* community is essential in the development of

moral responsibility precisely because it is through such “relationships” that the processes of formation of consciences begin and are sustained.

We examined the debate on the *origins* of moral responsibility to update our research with more recent arguments in neural psychology and biological sciences. Neuroscientists’ profile for psychopaths indicates they are persons deficient in “feelings” of empathy and “act without conscience.” We wondered if a hormone therapy (using oxytocin), as new research suggests, could bridge the irresponsibility gap? And what does this imply for moral theory – including our argument on the role of conscience for moral responsibility? We do not think this changes anything but if their argument holds true that inability to respond to oxytocin or similar “empathy hormone” indicate brain damage, it could provide insight to understand better the primary role of conscience as a *natural trigger* for empathy even if it achieves this through activating certain chemical components of the brain. This could be a significant development for science and morals. We maintain that altruism *beyond kin* and *reciprocation* remains a hallmark of the human genus. It is therefore not *selfishness* but *selflessness* that morally distinguishes us from our evolutionary cousins.

We concluded that even if we are predisposed to selfishness, as many have argued, we have the freedom and the rational impetus to seek its opposite. Evidence is there that we have an aboriginal instinct for social sympathy which is perhaps the basis for all moral sense and for the formation of community. At the core of the human psyche is a yearning for the *ideal community*. We are equipped with a natural mechanism to build and live that community. That *natural mechanism* is what we call *conscience*. It is a deep instinct for the good and true, a capacity to feel for the other and deny oneself to build an abiding community for all. We therefore conclude

this chapter by affirming that a *well formed* and *informed* conscience is the key to moral responsibility. The emphasis on being well formed and informed is obvious given the reality that a poorly formed or uninformed conscience has disastrous consequences.

### **5.1.2. CHAPTER TWO: PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT AND THEOLOGICAL VIEWS OF CONSCIENCE**

In this chapter we first examined representative psychological notions of moral development to help us understand the popular notion of conscience. We find in Freud's theory of repression within which he postulates his theory of conscience as having a significant influence on the decline of conscience or the present negative view of conscience at a time popular culture takes psychological views perhaps more seriously than philosophical and/or theological ones. He argues that the id, a primordial instinct of a sexual nature, represents a libidinal energy that "pressures" for expression but restrained by social norms or law. The restraints imposed on it by social norms causes "pain" and its expression is pleasurable. Hence, this "pleasure principle" seeks avoidance of pain at all cost but learns to discipline its appetites through socialization that results in the development of other structures within the psyche: the *ego* and the *superego*. Both are simply "modifications" of the id in its encounter with the world. They are therefore partly conscious and unconscious. The ego, as conscious ("reality principle"), in ideal situations, is synonymous with *reason* that puts a check on the *id* (*the pleasure principle*). The *superego* is more specifically a "modification" of the ego. As a regulator of the actions of the ego, it is synonymous with *conscience*. He does distinguish *conscience* and *ego ideal* as within the ego where the former represents the "don'ts" of the societal norms, and the

later represents the acceptable parts of social behavior. In the end, both become internalized and speak in their own voice – either reprimanding or praising as cases may be respectively.

Therefore Freud sees conscience as nothing but the product of repressed social angst (*soziale Angst*) – the “fear of society” arising from the conflict between the desire of the id to express itself freely and the social demand to discipline it – ensuring it acts in an acceptable way. It is then a neurotic manifestation than a healthy development. As an *internalized fear* of parental and social mechanisms of control, it needs to be expunged, outgrown, or healed. This is the basic reason behind his development of psychotherapy – to rid one of myriads of internalized fears stemming from parental and social inhibitions. He however does admit that following the demands of conscience (or social regulations) could be an expression of “civilized self-interest,” since social ordering depends on them.

We have argued that by forcing a distinction between the “conscience” and the “ego-ideal” Freud was unable to articulate a holistic and more positive view of conscience that not only *reproves* but also *approves*. We think that viewing the “ego-ideal” as the positive aspect of the same reality (of conscience) not only edges it closer to the theological notion of conscience but liberates it and even transforms the negative connotation associated with “repression” given that the contents of “ego-ideal” are as “internalized” as the contents of “conscience” in Freud. This reconstructs his wholly negative view of conscience in a way that allows reading the social angst (the reproofs that gives rise to conscience) not as “repression” as such but rather *obverts* to

“elevation” because they are primary lessons in *self-transcendence* and therefore represent a *symbolic moment* in the *growth* of the individual.<sup>773</sup>

So, we prefer “symbolic elevation” as properly more descriptive of what Freud calls “repression” given that it captures the experience of “growth” at all levels during this time: physiologically, we singled out bipedalism as a powerful symbolic gesture at this time for the child learns to *stand erect* and look heaven wards. Similar growth is experienced at the cognitive, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions such that the child could only reach full stature not by a fixation on self-gratifications but by struggling to de-center from itself and reach for the stars as it *learns* to “reach out” in loving relationship to others. Hence the real “repression” would be the *stifling of the capacity for selflessness and empathy* (that would result should the *id* be given an unrestricted expression). We affirm that stifling the potentialities for selflessness and/or empathy implies raising persons with a *disabled* conscience – those who cannot “feel” bad about hurting others – a generation of *psychopaths*. Those who have no active conscience can cause so much pain to others in the community, and in the world.

Other psychological theorists we examined agree on the need to wean the child from an infantile self-fixation towards an interests in others (Adler calls it “social interests”). This early self-transcending effort is the essence of conscience formation and indeed the formation of the moral sense. It will continue to be the very core of morality. Erikson refers to it as the “capacity” to find oneself as one loses oneself in others or to redefine oneself by including others. We affirm with Adler that the degree we are capable of including others in our interests – or making

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<sup>773</sup> The foregoing is taken from the conclusions we had in chapter two.

the interest of the larger whole our interests, to that degree does the individual or culture experience development. The role of conscience is to help us develop this capacity.

Piaget and Kohlberg helped consolidate the foregoing by highlighting the integral relationship between cognitive and moral development. We highlighted how these two cognitive structuralists underscored the role of feelings in the notion and development of conscience. While Piaget affirms it originates from “feeling” of respect and/or social sympathy, Kohlberg considers “feelings” in form of “perception of moral atmosphere” at the heart of conscience formation. While we noted in our general critique the problem with claims to a universally applicable invariant structure of moral development, nevertheless, we admit a progression in moral development as a fact of our experience. Kohlberg claims that those at lower levels of moral development act out of fear of punishment while those at higher levels act out of self-condemnation. Most of the Western authors reviewed in this study seem to share this view.

However, social learning theorists like Bandura made a sweeping critique of all psychological development theorists for reductionism and for manipulating experiments to predetermined goals. Their insight highlights the significance of other aspects of human experience like “affects” and “environment” in moral development that are rather neglected by psychological theorists in favor of the cognitive apparatus.

We argue that internal and external factors all play a part in the development of conscience and morals. We singled out the role “affect” or “emotions” play as a vital part of the human moral formation (particularly the formation of conscience) that has been overlooked. We explored the significance of emotions/affect as “drivers” of human behavior. Providing a link between affect and conscience underscores the latter’s significance for shaping behavior at

deeper levels than incidental decisions. Most of contemporary theologians we reviewed show an increasing interest in admitting the role of feelings (affect or emotions) in the understanding of conscience. This is a clear departure from traditional and classical views of conscience that is solely cognitive (the intellect without due regard for the role of emotions).

The theological analysis of the notion and nature of conscience found in Vatican II document, and the New Catechism shows evident inadequacies and ambiguities. We did not address ourselves to finding a solution to these ambiguities since our concern is neither with “objectivity” of norms (as found in the relationship of law to conscience) nor with the possible “errors” of conscience. We are rather concerned with searching for the influence that conscience has on behavior. Research indicates that cognitive maturity neither guarantees moral maturity nor behavior change. *We prefer to argue that cognitive maturity and emotional intelligence (maturity) harness the powers of conscience for transformative behavior.*

Obviously Aquinas’ notion of conscience we examined does not lead us to this conclusion. He however admits with Aristotle the power of “emotions” to determine our choices and actions. He however insists on the need to subject the passions to reason. Other theologians (Callahan, Curran, Spohn, Gula, Conn), philosophers, psychologists, and neuroscientists, provide insight for retrieving the role of emotions in the conceptualization of conscience. We acknowledge the problems associated with the notion of “emotion” in morality. We however insist that an accurate (not necessarily adequate) notion of conscience should give a central place to “feeling” because that is precisely what is at the very core of this phenomenon (conscience). If you remove “feeling” (*feeling* good or bad) from it, the notion becomes meaningless. And “how we feel” does often determine what we do. So, conscience influences us *deeper* than we admit.



Given that conscience is often identified with pathological guilt, we examined the notion of guilt as an “emotion” and differentiated “neurotic” guilt from “existential guilt”.<sup>774</sup> We affirm that we need to *feel* “existential guilt” to be truly human and to live in society with others. Our analysis of “shame” distinguishes it from “guilt” to underscore the uniqueness of African moral tradition built on “shame” rather than “guilt.” Given the close affinity between individuals and community in Africa, the notion of conscience finds its full expression in the community conscience. Therefore, it is not *internal sanctions* (“individual conscience”) but *external sanctions* (“community conscience” or its “moral voice”) that operate through the mechanism of “shame” that are at the heart of African moral formation. This is a significant input of our research and one that has serious implications. We insist at the end of this chapter that a retrieval of some form of a traditional system of shame in Africa is an imperative for moral development even if this means leaving it vulnerable to an obvious critique.

### **5.1.3 CHAPTER THREE: CONSCIENCE AND COMMUNITY**

In this chapter we first explored the notion of community. Given the phenomenon of double citizenship (there are many “diaspora” Nigerians), we affirmed with Selznick that in a globalizing world, “community” should neither be limited to location or territoriality (where members need to “spend their whole lives in it”) nor include all of one’s social relationships, but that the range of common interests and activities shared be broad enough rather than merely segmental; encompasses “whole persons,” rather than their passing interests. Therefore shared “beliefs and commitments” are essential to our notion of community in a world with increasing

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<sup>774</sup> A good example is the “guilt” of someone who was abused as a child (neurotic guilt); and the “guilt” felt by someone who ran over a 10 year old boy with his truck because he was drunk and driving (existential guilt). While the first guilt should be discouraged, the second must not. If the second does not exist, it should be induced!

“members” living in two different locations but fulfilling the requirements for membership of each of them. While exploring the nature of community we highlighted the insight in Selznick’s *seven integral elements* characterizing an ideal community: “historicity, identity, mutuality, plurality, autonomy, participation, and integration.”<sup>775</sup> The last (*integration*) holds in tension the other six elements ensuring the balance needed for a consistent effort at building and sustaining a wholesome community.

We pointed out the danger of losing our “sense of community” by either an *exaggerated sense of individual autonomy* (or *individualism* as in western culture) or a *false sense of communalism* (in African culture). On one hand we argued that the contractual model (*gesellschaft*) that supplanted the more primary/traditional model (*gemeinschaft*) in the West has enriched purses but ruined homes. It isolates people from one another, elevates *individualism*, and *celebrates self-interest*. As a consequence, it thrives on destroying a deeper appreciation of what we share in common as human beings: our sense of “community” without which a shared sense of right and wrong cannot emerge for lack of consensus.

On the other hand, our examination of African *communalism* and practices does reveal a disturbing paradox: why does a culture that boasts of incredible virtues of *sharing* and *caring* generate such unprecedented litany of greedy leaders? How does a communalistic culture that thrives on elevating community interest over that of the individual (encapsulated in the phrase “*because we are, therefore I am*”) reproduce generations of individuals with such incredible appetites for greed? How could we have such greed and insensitivity to the need of the larger

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<sup>775</sup> Philip Selznick, *Moral Commonwealth*, p. 361

communities in a system that holds greed as a central vice? Our answer is that these realities point to a rupture in the system. Our further research attempts to identify part of this rupture.

We noted that Africans believe in the synergistic relationship of all life. Therefore promoting life is at the core of African culture. Morality is defined along these lines as well: *whatever promotes the life and development of the community and its individuals is “good” and otherwise is “bad”*. A deeper exploration shows how this worldview, colored by tribal sentiments, has resulted in socio-moral pathology where thieving public servants gain the accolades of home communities (just because they are “sons and daughters of the soil”) and thereby destroying the basic fabric for both moral formation (as it deforms conscience) and socio-political and economic engineering. We therefore argue that African communalism is a model idea hampered by tribal instincts and rivalries. Unless old tribal insecurities give way to trust its potentials for nation building cannot be harnessed but rather would constitute a major hindrance to both statecraft and moral evolution.

Furthermore, we argue that true communities have an active moral voice. When each individual member of it plays his/her part in upholding moral discipline within the community, they create and sustain the community’s moral voice that acts as a non-coercive form of *external sanction*. This significantly influences the development and sustenance of individual conscience (*internal sanction*). We argue that conscience formation depends on an active moral voice of the community. Therefore a community that loses its moral voice by a disinclination to “lay moral claims” on its members gradually destroys the moral glue that binds it together. The consequence will be that government will find it increasingly tempting to develop a police state and introduce

more aggressive legislations and enforcement to check increasing amoral lifestyle. We insist that maintaining *internal sanctions* are far more effective for social order than its alternative.

Given that values that are intrinsic to conscience are essentially forged in community, we further argue, borrowing the words of Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XI) that conscience is an “*anamnesis*” (“a memory of origins”) or a divine imprint – an original idea of the good and true inhering in the very nature of the human person and recollected or called forth in the encounter with the “other” or more precisely in dialogue with the relevant moral community. Though it inheres in the individual’s ontological nature, he/she recognizes this *inner voice* only as he *opens up* to hear that other voice of its authentic moral community regarding the “good” and “true.” This is integral to the self-transcending process in the formation of conscience. It implies a mutual relation - a *creative dialogue* between the *within* and *without* – between the individual and community in collaborative search for an ever purer notion of the “good” and “true”.

Therefore a well formed conscience (*ideal conscience*) is the product of a functionally active moral community (the *ideal moral community*). They complement each other. When individuals unite for a common purpose in the direction of a defined common good, the resulting unity (“fusion of existences”) is what constitutes the essence of an ideally active moral community as found both in the Church and in the secular society. It is in such a basic moral community the “voice” of individual conscience is both formed and heard as the echo of the “voice” of that community. It is implicit then that this community primarily *mediates* God’s voice to the individual through its own recollection of the original good and true that affirms its own authentic moral voice. The individual also *mediates* God’s voice to the community as it

*participates* in this *creative dialogue*. This dialogue is the *medium* for constantly purifying a blurred vision of the good and true for both parties. But the unity essential for a shared vision of the true and good is only possible where there is trust and openness. We argue that perhaps the greatest problem with most African societies today is this lack of trust due to tribal rivalries.

Nigeria provides the historical context for our research. We tried to understand the deeper roots for the failure of African model of communalism in generating altruistic individuals (as proven by extremely venal Nigerian [African] leaders. We identified TRIBALISM as the primary culprit. It is the single socio-moral “pathology” (or vice) that feeds other ancillary pathologies or social vices (poverty, witchcraft mania, cronyism, nepotism, among others). We argue that tribalism as *unwarranted prejudice* (based solely on tribal differences) constitutes the core socio-moral pathology that drives conscience deformation in Nigeria. This is because by spreading the poison of *distrust* and inter-and-intra-tribal *rivalry* it disrupts the natural process of *self-transcendence* (the proper development of selflessness) which is at the core of proper conscience formation. The effect is the destruction of the native capacity for nation building and functionally serves as the primary feeder of systemic corruption<sup>776</sup> at least in Nigeria.

Tribalism is also exploited at the religious level by Northern oligarchs and elites for political interests. Insights from the social and behavioral sciences help illumine the role of primary groups in “mediating” cultural problems. Different factors possibly contribute to the reality of tribalism in Nigeria. However, Gordon Allport’s insight on the *nature of prejudice* (in

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<sup>776</sup> Tribalism is the crudest form of native self-interest at the group level. We argue that it etches the idea of self-interest deeper within the psyche of its victims by emphasizing how people are *different* rather than how they are *similar* to others. It feeds on “distrust” of others outside of one’s kin or ethnicity. In so doing, it activates more readily the basic insecurity and fear in all humans that drive them toward self-preservation. The result is the inability to forge a deep unity necessary for nation building and a deep sense of insecurity regarding the common purse triggers a looting frenzy that is at the heart of systemic corruption as we have witnessed in Nigeria for decades.

six theories)<sup>777</sup> provides the background for our argument that tribalism is a socialized behavior (largely learned by *miming* significant others) and can therefore be unlearned through a *reverse socialization* process.

In addition we argued that if “insecurity” is a primary driver of prejudice (*frustration theory* of prejudice), and that “highly prejudiced people lacked secure and affectionate relationships with their parents,” then there is a need for a critical re-evaluation of our child-rearing practices given the high incidence of child abuse that prove to leave victims with deep psychological scars (often low self-esteem issues symptomatic of insecurity). We then posed a question on the possibility that our leaders’ irresponsible actions could be traceable to childhood formative dysfunction than merely assuming them to be deliberative stances or choices.

We made three recommendations towards solving the problem of tribalism: First is *reverse socialization* or re-education process aimed at reforming or updating our consciousness (and conscience) and change the mindset that profiles how we see others and/or how we relate to those different from our tribe. It will be mandatory to teach this at every level of formal education process. Secondly is *legislating* and vigorously *implementing* a comprehensive law against all forms of tribal discrimination. Thirdly is a *national dialogue* on tribalism that aims at bringing this monster out of the closet to national consciousness with intent to eradicate it.

Finally, we examined the link between conscience formation and *globalization*. Apart from defining globalization, we identified “international tribalism” as a socio-moral pathology whereby local tribalists, plagued by native self-interest find kindred spirits in international

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<sup>777</sup> Gordon Allport provided six theories of prejudice based on areas of emphasis: the *historical*, *socio-cultural*, *situational*, *psychodynamic*, *phenomenological*, and *earned reputation* perspectives respectively.

players due to the phenomenon of globalization. We defined *international tribalism* as “institutionalized self-interest” at the global level; it refers to an orientation to international relations (involving individuals, nations, institutions, or corporate organs) that is based solely on self-interest (economic profit) and intended to be achieved at a *significant detriment* to, or without concern for the wellbeing of the opposing party. It is the *idealization of self-interest* by projecting it unto the international space. We argue that given that globalization enables the interpenetration of the local in the global, there has emerged a group of international players (or tribalists) whose orientation and actions are driven by the same pathology found in local tribalism. An apt illustration is the increasing influence of “lobby groups” (in United States) in shaping government policy (local and foreign) even at the detriment of the common interests of the people as a trend that should cause deep concern in modern statecraft. The *virtual* “international community” populated by this group of international actors influence the local community in a way analogous to the influence of the moral community on [mal-]formation of individual conscience.

We argue that their actions not only corrupt new or old local actors but also pollute the local *moral atmosphere* thereby influencing the moral ambience or consciousness of the local community. This is precisely how they influence the moral deformation of individual consciences. We assert that the foreign policy agenda of some governments (in the West and a few emerging economic powers like China<sup>778</sup>) and the profit agenda of some Multinationals they protect have been shown to be driven by a “pathological” mindset. Some of their actions have

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<sup>778</sup> Recent developments in Ghana is of particular concern because of the brazen way some Chinese entrepreneurs bulldoze their way into mining activities without license, with little care for the people and grossly insensitive to the environmental havoc they leave behind in their search for gold. See, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/07/world/africa/ghana-arrests-chinese-in-gold-mining-regions.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/07/world/africa/ghana-arrests-chinese-in-gold-mining-regions.html?_r=0)

proven they have little or no considerations for the wellbeing of the locals. We argue that such insensitivity sows discontent and bitterness that becomes the seedbed that groom the ills that now (or would in the future) plagues both the local and international community.

Our final recommendation is a *paradigm shift* in foreign policy agenda to reflect compassion towards the vulnerable people of the local communities involved in all foreign relationships. In the words of Anodea Judith, “*Each of our hearts is a cell in the global heart, giving and receiving love. Each time we create an act of love, we inspire others to do the same.*”<sup>779</sup> Giving priority to the wellbeing of the local communities (different from the practice of “settling” their leaders) is an invaluable investment in foreign relationships that yields dividends of peace in a globalizing world precisely because responsible actions have generative effects. As “responders,” irresponsibility begets irresponsibility and vice versa. The seed of hate is sown when we act without conscience or insensitive to the feelings of others. We contend that major world players significantly impact the character of people in their playing field. Since what we sow is what we reap,<sup>780</sup> it does not matter then how long it takes, “the chickens do come home to roost” someday. We think it is prudent statecraft to invest in long term profitable ventures. A foreign policy agenda built on sincere concern for the “others” parties wellbeing is good investment in the long run.

#### **5.1.4 CHAPTER FOUR: CONSCIENCE, COMMUNITY AND SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION**

This chapter examines the phenomenon of systemic corruption in Nigeria with attention to its link to conscience. In an effort to understand the notion and nature of corruption we

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<sup>779</sup> Judith Anodea, *The Global Heart, Op Cit*, p. 288. The stress is ours.

<sup>780</sup> See Galatians 6.7-9



provided a working definition of “corruption” and adopted a functional description of “systemic” corruption. We insisted on a definition that is not morally neutral but one that engages the individual as a moral person (agent), one whose actions define his/her character. Our preference was to differentiate *systemic* from *incidental* corruption. Our examination of the Nigerian situation does indicate it is a nation plagued by “systemic” rather than “incidental” corruption. Our effort to understand the roots of corruption in Nigeria extends beyond identifying merely a *venal* political class to underscore how *tribalism* has enabled a “structure of sin” that both feeds and sustains a “system of corruption”. In our view, by enabling a pervasive culture of distrust, tribalism ruptures the very foundations for building a network of healthy socio-political relationships and ensures the impossibility of articulating a unified notion of the “common-good” that is indispensable for a true sense of nationhood.

More critical for our research, the distrust that tribalism fosters disables a vital element in the social content (or *nurture* component) of conscience formation. Given that we consider conscience to be a natural mechanism for self-transcendence (selflessness), it is fair to argue that its distortion, based on “distrust,” is more likely to trigger a stampede of self-interest. Given the reality of such a stampede in form of excessive greed among our leaders, we identify the real culprit as “tribalism”. But its effectiveness is by distorting the proper formation of consciences. “Trust” is a foundational quality that we need to imbibe in relation to “others” in early development as a critical key to unlocking an *original memory* of the “good” and “true” *inhering in* “others”. Therefore, its integral relation to the proper development of conscience and its subsequent exercise cannot be overemphasized.

Our claim is that *international “tribalism”* is a correlate (in *intention*), of *local tribalism* for both are forms of “institutionalized self-interest” that have the same objectives and goals – private gains without regard for objective ethical standards. We argue that local corruption in Nigeria (and Africa) is enabled by tribalism and reinforced by its correlative vice. It is our view that multinationals and other foreign interests that are complicit in the looting of Nigerian treasury have also become complicit in its effects which include not just hunger and disease that characterize nation states in stasis, but the emergent trends of international crimes like Nigerian e-mail scams, piracy in Somalia, and emergent terror networks. We conclude that any effort to reform must begin with sincere effort in the West to come clean with their past and adopt a new policy of engagement with the Nations of Africa in particular and the third world in general.<sup>781</sup>

Some of the solutions we propose are partly based on the insights we gleaned from the analysis of three mainline theories of systemic corruption (big bang, gradualism, targeted gradualism).<sup>782</sup> Firstly, we propose a more *holistic approach* that accommodates the insights of the above theories and in addition would invest in a robust reorientation effort at the grassroots the framework of which is developed in this chapter (five). Secondly we consider prioritizing asset recovery and making it a predicate offense to money laundering as a critical part of that holistic approach. Thirdly, we recommend a new international policy that makes “extraordinary” looting of national treasury (like we have witnessed in Nigeria and other African States) a “crime against humanity” that should be tried at the world court. The value of this has been explained in the preceding section. The “context” of corruption in developing countries makes it too

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<sup>781</sup> This paragraph is adapted from our conclusion in Chapter 4.

<sup>782</sup> These are broad categorizations of mainline theories that take cognizance of “principal-agent theory” and “economics of crime” only in their broader aspects.

vulnerable for any possible internal redress to be effective in good time. External sanctions could provide temporary but necessary balance till the countries are able to build viable institutions for accountability themselves. In addition we recommend that the West should appoint *independent Ombudsmen* in each country that has multinationals working in the third world<sup>783</sup>, but particularly in Nigeria and Africa where the sourcing of natural resources have long become a source of pain to many of the local people. They will ensure that international standards are maintained at all times. We recommend a “glocalized”<sup>784</sup> moral reform as a necessary sequel to the foregoing.

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<sup>783</sup> We witnessed recently the tragedy in Bangladesh where a building collapsed and killed over a thousand factory workers who produce cloths for Western industries. Priority was given to profit but no attention paid to safety.

<sup>784</sup> This term has been explained earlier (see footnote no. 20), but it refers to the “interpenetration of the global in the local” not merely socio-culturally, through the agency of social networks enabled by the internet and news media, but also economically and politically, by the direct action of international organs and nation states that help shape world events. This phenomenon implies that the global significantly impacts the local communities even though it is not necessarily vice versa at the present for those in the developing world except for those places like Nigeria where “oil” disruption could impact significantly the global oil market. We are recommending a “glocalized” moral reform given the important part foreign governments and MNCs (Multinationals) play in the problem of Nigeria and Africa. Our analysis so far indicates the extent they are involved in our problem even without a litany of their past “colonial sins” being our focus. Achebe already did a great job of that and as he says, there is need to be consistently revisiting the inherent superiority complex factor that negatively impact or “colors” any African contact with the West. Achebe’s work in this direction has been well synthesized by Christopher S. Nwodo in *Philosophical Perspectives on Chinua Achebe, Loc. Cit.*, p. 277-306. If “relationality” is the essence of our be-ing in the world, as Uzukwu has forcefully argued, and as highlighted in this research, we have to keep looking for ways to relate at more positive levels. There is nothing too wonderful in isolationism. However, what is necessary is due vigilance. There should always be due *vigilance* in the kind of contracts we sign with the rest of the world. Often this is done too quickly; and only when it favors the West. The Japanese root of this “glocalization” is interpreted “global-local” and it encapsulates the original idea of the co-mingling of everything in everything. We need each other for better or worse. What we should strive for is to try to always improve our relationships in any encounter with another (individual, group, or nation). This is at the heart of “Ubuntu”, and at the heart of African communalism and hospitality. At one side of that relationship is *giving*, and its flip side is *taking* whatever is positive from the other. Japan took from the West some seeds of *insight* and used it to add to theirs and make a giant leap in growth and development without losing what they value as a distinct culture (they lost some over time anyway). We need to do the same, but we must also be smarter each time than naïve about the West’s wholesale “good intentions” (like our ancestors).

Finally, at the local level, we propose a *critical deconstruction*<sup>785</sup> (reassessment) of our traditional moral formation process, some *uncritically “received” practices* with the aim to retrieve what is useful and trash whatever we find detrimental to a wholesome moral development. Our analysis underscores inherent ambivalence in our socio-cultural practices like the adulation paid to known “looters” who are public servants, politicians, or “socialites” based solely on kinship solidarity. We stressed the dangers of such practices on the moral and political formation of present and future generations. Other ambivalences are in the form of conceptual blurriness that requires a critical shift from compactness to differentiation. A few is addressed in this chapter.

## **5.2.0 PART TWO: RECOMMENDATIONS AND GENERAL CONCLUSION**

### **5.2.1. CRITICAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.2.1.1 MORAL REFORM AND THE THREE-STAGE-PROCESS**

We recommend a deliberate “glocalized” moral reform as a central proposal of this research. Our foregoing analyses underscore the critical role of *reverse-socialization* in such a reform effort. We stress that *the direct goal of reverse-socialization is the reformation or updating of conscience*. It is our view that a social malady like tribalism or racism arises as the direct consequence of malformation of conscience in the socialization process from early childhood to adulthood. It is a socialized behavior or attitude in relation to others “not like us.”

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<sup>785</sup> The term “deconstruction” in this research refers to the critical re-evaluation of whatever we hold to be valuable in the light of how it has helped shape our life for the better or worse. The goal is to keep and promote whatever is of true value and discard whatever we find to be unhealthy.

Of course the correlation between “racism” and “tribalism” is its prejudice for the “other not like us.” The former is based on “color,” the latter on “blood” kinship. Ultimately, both are actually about “blood kinship.” It is a socialized behavior that treats “others not like us” differently.

An example helps illustrate how this formation often starts early. Two white toddlers, accompanied by their parents, are approached by a black person on the sidewalk. The black person smiled and waved to the kids. One smiled and waved back. The other ran back to the safety of its parents. In a related incident, John, an Igbo-man, had an encounter. He lives in the same apartment building with a family from a Yoruba tribe. They were good neighbors, and friendly with the son of this other family. He came home from work one day and gave this boy a cone of ice-cream. The boy was delighted. He took it inside to show his parents, but when they saw him with it, he was given a beating, and the ice-cream was thrown into the trash. Since then, this kid avoided talking to John. What happened here? Without reading much into this episode, is it possible that the parenting protocol for relating to “strangers” is different for the kids in the two accounts? We do not know the internal details, but can we judge the outward behavior?

Obviously, most parents warn their children about “strangers,” and for good reasons! It is also true that some parents warn their children about “blacks” in Western cultures, and about “Omo-Igbo,” “nyamiri” or “ofé nmanu” or “aboki” (for the Igbo or Yoruba or Hausa person respectively in popular terminology) in Nigeria. Without prejudice to the “wisdom” of a healthy “caution” with “unknown persons” in a world like ours, we argue that a deliberate effort to instigate *fear* of the “other” who is not “one of us” is the beginning of how “nurture” corrupts conscience. It is not arguable that the “reasons” adduced for this fear (as an expression of truth or irrational prejudice) has any real relevance except to confirm an existing insecurity. As such,

*children formed in insecurity will grow up with a stranger-phobia, a distrust of any black person or a person of a different tribe* respectively. It will therefore take reverse socialization aimed at reforming the mindset based on prejudice and distrust to one of trust and acceptance to achieve a change of attitude. This change of attitude is the goal of “reverse-socialization.

The implication is that our conceptualization of “reverse-socialization” or “conscientization” is essentially a process we consider synonymous with, and integral to “conscience reform.” It primarily refers in this research to a *re-education* or *updating* of conscience and the sharpening of moral consciousness. We have argued that tribalism, racism, or xenophobia, are all learnt behaviors. Therefore, they could be “reversed” through painstaking process aimed at reforming the distorted moral “mind-set” that formed it giving birth what we consider a “malformed conscience”. We have indicated in chapter four how “tribalism” is an “institutionalization of self-interest” that overtime evolved as a primary driver for systemic corruption in Nigeria. We indicated in our global analysis how this “institutionalized self-interest” at the international level is not just driving local corruption but impacting moral formation as well. The goal of “reverse-socialization” is bringing to fuller consciousness the moral bankruptcy of an attitude that promotes “tribalism” as the gateway to recover proper conscience formation in traditional societies like Nigeria. In other words, we consider it obvious at this point that wakening the moral consciousness of whomever practices *tribalism (or racism)* is synonymous to activating, educating, and updating or reforming his/her conscience.

Our central recommendation as to how to achieve this process of updating or reformation starts with sowing *mental seeds* – implanting ideas that counter the poison of the specified social

malady. This is what we consider as “targeted” reform process.<sup>786</sup> This implies the need to identify and focus on certain primary ideas (mental “seeds”) that are *relevant to specific goals and contexts*. From our example, in social contexts where “tribalism” or “racism” is identified as a factor, themes like “trust” and “acceptance” will represent *primary seeds* to be “targeted” as the remedy to the problem in the reform process.

We are living at a time when technology is turning attention to nature – relearning the wisdom of how nature does things. Scientists in this domain of research have discovered that nature adopts very simple ways to solving seemingly complex problems.<sup>787</sup> At the beginning of this research, we hoped to find a key for grass-root critical education (that could awaken the critical consciousness of masses of local people), virtually natural, and simple enough to be grasped by the largely illiterate masses of people in agrarian communities of Nigeria (and Africa). We think we found this in the concepts that are common to all farming communities: *planting, weeding, and harvesting*. We adapted this familiar language for educational purposes hoping that their native symbolism will be powerful enough to captivate their imagination.

The “**three-stage-process**” is therefore a theoretical model proposed as a teaching tool for raising social consciousness in any given area of particular moral concern. Though it is modeled for more traditional societies, like Nigeria, yet it could be adapted for more sophisticated societies as well. The idea is to evoke the *power of symbolism* in capturing the imagination of the people to *engage in*, and *commit to* the re-education process necessary for a

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<sup>786</sup> The physical sciences employ this method of “targeting” for greater effectiveness in focused research. The medical sciences in particular employ “targeted” treatment as a way to deal with aggressive pathogens. We employ “targeted” reform as a method to deal with socio-moral maladies for the reasons of greater effectiveness.

<sup>787</sup> See Jeffrey O. Kephart, “Computer Science: Learning from Nature,” *Science*, Volume 331: 6018 (2:2011): pp. 682-683; <http://www.nature.com/scitable>

desired outcome – the reformation of conscience that would change behavior leading to social transformation. *Planting*, *Weeding*, and *Harvesting* are primary conceptual symbols (or categories) in the life cycles of most agrarian communities of Nigeria and Africa. Each represents an important moment in their daily lives – each stage is critical to a “good harvest” (the goal of every farmer). Given their familiarity with, and the deep meaning they evoke in the mind of the average person in most traditional agrarian societies like Nigeria, we chose them to constitute the primary *conceptual symbols* instrumental for updating moral consciousness in these or similar societies.

**Planting:** As already noted above, the *planting season* is often preceded by careful deliberation. The “seed” that will be planted in the local farm is a decision the farmer makes yearly with his family or partners [kinsmen]. He considers the short and long term benefits of whatever choice of crop he decides to seed next farming cycle. He weighs the possible impact on personal, family and communal needs; evaluates economic factors like market trends, and possible impact of weather and environmental conditions (like disease control resources). He might even deliberate on the political situation, government policies and subsidies, among others. In the end, his choice is never born out of whim but the product of a *deliberative process*.

Analogously, the “planting” season in our model signals a time for *creative dialogue*<sup>788</sup> with the specific aim of identifying, at a communal level, the conceptual “**seed[s]**” that needs to be “planted” in the course of moral education cycle. This cycle does not however mean a year but maybe set at between 2-10 year period for functional and practical reasons. Once there is a

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<sup>788</sup> Paulo Freire has argued forcefully on the value of dialogue as an indispensable tool in developing “critical consciousness” and has social transformation as its goal. See his *Education in Critical Consciousness*, Bloomsbury Academic, reprint edition, 2013, pp. 4-6; 34



consensus as to the choice of “seed” (an idea, often a “virtue”), the actual “planting” proceeds as (or ought to be) a communal effort. The reason for the “creative dialogue” session is to ensure that everyone engages in the first step of the process and serves as possible insurance for participating in the second step – the actual planting. As noted earlier, the model is a pedagogical tool tailored for adult conscientization process. This model does not discard but builds upon an existing dialogical model of dialogue (or “palaver”) that is common to any African community.<sup>789</sup> Even where possible consensus was not reached as soon as expected, the very possibility of that primary dialogue already serves as preparatory similar to how “tilling” (plow or harrow) the soil is preparatory for planting. Unless the ground is ready, the actual planting of the seed has to wait. Every session in the dialogical process is analogous to “tilling” the soil – the *soil* of the human heart, the biblical seat of conscience. In fact, every critical dialogue is an effort to awaken the conscience – or moral consciousness.

Each moral community has a peculiar moral deficiency. Therefore, the deliberative process is meant to identify the moral “seed” best suited to address their need. Eventually, the “seed[s]” chosen for “planting” will become the target of family discussions, the focus for preaching in churches, mosques, and other religious and secular outlets. It will form a central part of the school curriculum in all tiers of learning in that community, region/country.<sup>790</sup> Above

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<sup>789</sup> Most African communities have a tradition of dialogue (a “town hall” meeting) where most issues are brought to the attention of the community by the leaders (or Chiefs) if the issue is of great moment. There is effort to engage “everyone,” except that often this implies “men” in prevalently patriarchal societies of Africa. The dialogical process we propose will be truly all inclusive even as it builds on traditional forms of solving problems.

<sup>790</sup> The *creative dialogue* we propose happens at different levels: family, clan, village, town, local government, state, region, and national. Paulo Freire speaks of “generative themes” that could be revealed in each “limit-situation” that range from particular units to broader aspects (moving from small communities to regional, national, and continental levels) such that it acquires a universal character depending on its extensions. We quote him: “In sum, limit-situation imply the existence of persons who are directly or indirectly served by these situations, and of those who are negated and curbed by them. Once the latter come to perceive these situations as the frontier between being and nothingness,

all, it will provide the direction for the process of reverse socialization. *Critical dialogue* is a constant source of generating new stream of questions as to how to achieve the goals of “reverse-socialization,” which, as noted above has as goal the reformation of conscience.

**Paulo Freire**, whose work on pedagogy provides an inspiration to this segment, argues that domination is the “fundamental theme” of our time.<sup>791</sup> Therefore, the process of critical education would aim at its opposite – “liberation.” While liberation remains the ultimate objective of the dialogical process suggested here, however, each historical context has unique “sub-themes” directed to achieve goals particular to that context. In the Nigerian context, while *liberation* ought to remain the ultimate goal, themes that build “**trust**” and promote “**selflessness**” (as a counter measure to “tribalism” and “corruption”) will be the particular goal of creative dialogue sessions at national, regional, and community levels. In additions, regions, states, and communities may have other “sub-themes” aimed at addressing other social-moral problems peculiar to their contexts. In the United States, for instance, attention should be directed to “generative themes” that aim to counter the scourge of unique social ills like *consumerism, racism, militarism, and individualism*. While these themes have a national import, each of them has more relevance in some regions of that country than in others.

Though our global analysis stresses the influence of world powers on weaker nations of the third world, it fails to strictly identify that influence as a form of “domination,” which it

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they begin to direct their increasingly critical actions towards achieving the untested feasibility implicit in that perception. On the other hand, those who are served by the present limit-situation regard the untested feasibility as a threatening limit-situation which must not be allowed to materialize, and act to maintain the status quo. Consequently, liberating actions upon an historical milieu must correspond not only to the generative themes but to the way in which these themes are perceived. This requirement in turn implies another: the investigation of meaningful thematic.” See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum 2000), pp. 102-103

<sup>791</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, *Ibid.* p. 103.

obviously is. Therefore, while this “three stage process” is more relevant to third world nations, like Nigeria, but its full effect depends on similar creative dialogue happening on the opposite side of the Atlantic – among the “dominators” who try to shape world events. Hence, when powerful nations like United States engages in a creative dialogue aimed at overcoming some of the “pathologies” of its own culture: *consumerism, racism, militarism, or individualism*, it is inevitable that it will have to confront the reality of being in a position of “oppressor”.

Therefore, the theme of “domination” illumines the different aspects of the “pathologies” above. If the dialogue is sincere, its effect will be the amelioration of the inclination or need to dominate both *outside* and *inside* its borders. This will provide a boost not only to the “liberation” process for those impacted by their dominance (especially in the third world) but also in its own “liberation.” This is an important point given that those who dominate others are in a sense, in a deeper state of bondage.<sup>792</sup> And from the insights of our global analysis, we all are impacted by one another. We cannot save ourselves alone. We need to collaborate with others to achieve our fullest potential. This “fullest potential” does not necessarily mean more material wealth or power, but a deeper sense of happiness. Being in a state of dominance does not guarantee the later but could actually diminish that possibility.

It is however the *desire* and *action* of the oppressed themselves towards liberation that is critical to its actualization. Breaking the shackles of dependency is incomplete without

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<sup>792</sup> Jean Jacques Rousseau writes in his *Social Contract*, “Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains. Those who think themselves the masters of others are indeed greater slaves than they.” Cited in Tom Butler-Bowdon, *50 Philosophy Classics: Thinking, Being, Acting, Seeing, Profound Insights and Powerful Thinking from 50 Key Books* (Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2013, Kindle Edition), Kindle Locations 4465-4466.

psychological liberation.<sup>793</sup> As Paulo Freire would argue, a “dominated consciousness” often perceives only a fragmented view of his “limit-situation” (perceives it as an “epiphenomena”), and therefore fails to know or comprehend his true situation.<sup>794</sup> They then fail to realize how this ignorance of their true situation constitutes a critical part of their continued subjugation, an important part of the strategy of dominance is to achieve and maintain a “culture of silence” or passivity in the face of monstrous abuse and oppression. This is an inglorious state Nigerians have attained due largely to the coercive approach to governance of many years of despotic military leadership. To reverse this passivity, the masses have to be gradually conscientized, or more appropriately, gradually led to achieve a *deeper level* of critical consciousness.

The temptation however is for leaders of this movement towards conscientization and social transformation to foist their ideas on this largely passive people. This will impede the goals of the process because such approach underscores a presumption that the people do not know what is good for them. This treats them as “objects” instead of as “subjects”. According to Freire, the leaders and the led are “equally Subjects of revolutionary action,” and their reality is the “medium” for achieving transformation through critical dialogue where both parties (the leaders and the led) are “actors in *intercommunication*.”<sup>795</sup>

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<sup>793</sup> This is evident in the fact that political independence that all nations of Africa experienced did not materialize in real liberation. Imperialist forces used different strategies to ensure the shackles of dependency are maintained and therefore perpetuating domination in a new form of colonialism.

<sup>794</sup> P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 104

<sup>795</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 129. Hanna Arendt argues forcefully how our “word and deed” constitute a composite of human “action” and through it we “insert ourselves” into the world revealing ourselves to it like a “second birth...” By taking initiative expressed in “work, deed and action” we take back our original form or dignity. Therefore we are truly human when we engage in deliberative action (that includes voicing our view in a community of being) as real subjects. See Hanna Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 175-247

**WEEDING:** This concept is enriched by experience among farmers in traditional societies. It identifies the conceptual “weeds” that needs to be “uprooted” to make room for the new plants to survive. While weeding is a major stage after planting, it has minor segments throughout the process. It is an integral part of every dialogical process. However, given the fact that “weeding” is given particular attention after planting in traditional farming, we accord it due significance in the dialogical process.

Methodologically, it represents that stage when particular attention is paid to particular concepts (words, stories, or lore), mental attitudes or beliefs, behavior or practices, and persons (or institutions) that endanger the fruitfulness or objectives of the entire process. This stage is analogously critical to the effectiveness of the next stage as weeding is critical to the “harvest season” by ensuring the healthy growth of the plant. As in weeding, it *uproots everything* that is not part of the “plant”. We can only speak in broad outlines here given limitations of space. It is our hope that this method would be given full elaboration in a post-doctoral project. But this stage focuses on identifying and eliminating specific cultural baggage that hinder the full flowering of the process. It has different dimensions: conceptual, personal, and institutional dimensions that we now elaborate as follows:

The *conceptual dimension* will include beliefs, lore, proverbs, and idioms that are potentially destructive. We will identify a few of them in this chapter. This is perhaps the most important aspect of “weeding” as a methodological process. It is a critical assessment of all “traditions” we have received from our “elders” since the beginning of our existence as a people. Though it is has comprehensive extensions, it does not mean it must be done all at once. Focus should be placed on more urgent areas of community or national life. We place greater emphasis

on moral and religious practices of our culture even before political “practices”. The reason is that even though the moral, religious, and political culture seems to be *integral* to the life of the people, we consider the first two as having deeper roots than the last. Hence, when the former is properly addressed, it would impact positively upon the later.

The *personal dimension* will identify “typologies” of personalities whose words and actions inject toxicity into the “soil” or “moral sphere” of the community. The goal is to ensure such personality types are never allowed public office, and any public servant whom they sponsor directly or indirectly has the same fate. The political drama that led to the literal kidnapping of a sitting governor (Chris Ngige) by his political godfather (Chris Uba) in Anambra State of Nigeria is a case in point. The refusal to sign away billions of Naira of public fund (meant for Anambra state people) to the godfather resulted in a political drama that shocked the State and the world. Personalities like that “godfather” should be “ostracized” from ever meddling in public life. Without critical dialogue about what is wrong with this kind of act, the younger generation begins to see people with such pedigree as “models” to emulate.<sup>796</sup>

Conversely, the character “type” represented in Ngige should be promoted as a model for the young. He exhibited courage and integrity in a critical context where most give in to fear or greed. His example will remain an important “personality type” for modeling proper “conscience formation” for young Nigerians. He stood firm on the inviolability of the principles that regulate public office. He fought the adversaries of the “state” (those whose ultimate goal is to harm the

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<sup>796</sup> Most scholarly views affirm that young people’s moral adjustment depends largely on the “local consensus” than anything else. William C. Spohn points out the impact of “contrary values” on the moral development of young city dwellers that are often open to media influence. He argues that their consciences are “dulled” when they are not adequate moral vocabulary or when for political convenience important moral issues are “dumbed down” for some selfish or utilitarian goals. See W. C. Spohn, “Conscience and Moral Development,” p. 135; Sissela Bok, *Mayhem: Violence as Public Entertainment* (Reading, Mass.: Adison Wesley, 1998).

community) and won. Integrity and honesty should be seen as capable of winning the day if there is the will to fight for it. The courage comes largely from the support of well-meaning people whose interests are actually at stake. His stance on principles was reinforced by the moral voice of his primary community – his constituency that stood behind him through his ordeal.

The *institutional dimension* identifies all forms of “organized wrongdoing” (in politics, the three tiers of government, educational institutions, organized religion, NGOs, financial institutions, business enterprises, and organized crimes like 419). The idea is to arrive at a deeper understanding of how these “organized wrongdoing” hinder our collective growth and stultify our individual and common destiny.<sup>797</sup> Therefore, the “weeding” process directed at institutions and organizations (priority attention is given to public institutions), aims at seeing them as the fountain from which “the quality of life” flows unto the people. These “institutions” of governance, like the seed, if they are defective, will mean the family will go hungry and become needy and poor. Even when they are healthy seeds, without due attention to the planting and weeding and other conditions that the farmer carefully contributes to its proper growth and development, they will fail to deliver the dividends expected of good harvest. So, they should be made to guard jealously these institutions or else they will fail. If they fail, it affects not just their life and happiness but that of their children and generations yet unborn.

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<sup>797</sup> We exposed the “corruption” of the system in chapter four and described the rot in public office. Though there is hardly sufficient clarity as to the depth of corruption in all cases, but it is hardly disputed to claim that no institution is unaffected by corruption in Nigeria. We however argued in the same chapter that apart from the recommendations proposed therein, we should pursue a more holistic approach to the problem. A more robust approach includes all those recommendations and in addition seeks a deeper solution through a long term investment in grass-root conscientization process reforms conscience. This is a “down-up” approach to the problem as complementary rather than opposed to those other “top-down” solutions. We insist that until a critical mass of people are awakened to their role in good governance, the gains of any solutions to the problem of systemic corruption will disappear with time as the “system” gradually recalibrates and transforms reformers into the “reformed” who maintain the status quo.

During weeding, the farmer usually tills the soil around the “plant” to allow for moisture and proper air circulation and prevent toxicity among the plants. Analogously, during weeding, attention is paid to how the *passivity of the masses* provides the necessary and sufficient conditions for the “weeds” to grow and thrive. We have the choice to provide the proper conditions for the “plants” to grow instead by ensuring the weeds are eliminated. The process of “eliminating” the “weeds” in the system cannot be accommodated in this study because of space, but suffice to say that it is to be integrated into the political democratic process as the engine of power that resides in the people.

The real reason behind the impunity of our venal leadership is the very poor development of the democratic process in place. They have virtually perfected the art of “buying” the electorate during the elections as part of a broader plan for “rigging” the election. Constituencies and towns are often “settled” with specific sums of money so that they can vote “en bloc” for a particular candidate. It does not only make it impossible for poorer candidates to get elected, but it forms part of the deeper rupture in the moral orientation of the community. It describes in part how whole communities “sell” their consciences and barter away their only chance to a better government. At the political realm, “weeding” will aim at addressing the problems of the political process from the prism of the dynamics of power.

**HARVEST:** Obviously, a good harvest is the end or goal of every farmer. Analogously, “harvest,” the third stage in our model, represents the end or goal of the dialogical process. It describes the cumulative results or “fruits” of the preceding stages. As the hope of a bumper harvest provides hope and impetus to the farmer, so the end result of the dialogical process provides the impetus for persistency in the difficult task of socio-moral re-engineering. Just as



the farmer does not give up farming due to a poor harvest in a particular season, so also those charged with implementing the *reverse socialization process* do not surrender due to initial poor results. Persistency has its adequate rewards in due time.

The specific character of this stage of the process is not merely observing outcomes but more essentially assessing such outcomes in the light of the primary ideals envisioned at the beginning of the process. Therefore, a proper assessment of results should be able to delineate specific areas that need closer attention. Given that this dialogical process is the continuous or cyclic application of theory/reflection to practice and vice versa, we adopt the concept of “**praxis**” as an amalgam of that reality.<sup>798</sup> The notion of “praxis” (see footnote) we reference here does not admit of too sharp a bifurcation between reflection and action but as one *fluid reality*. So, the stages of “planting,” “weeding,” and “harvesting,” are better understood as a synthesis of critical dialogue and action as one unbroken activity or event. The “planting” for instance happens right in the heat of dialogue as the community struggles to wrestle with words aimed at building a better community. As they proceed to further implement the consensus view, they are ever open to new insight arising from reflection upon their choice. This could lead to new dialogue. The importance here is a constant openness to new voices to be heard but this does not mean that there is no discernible distinction between critical dialogue and specific external action (“praxis”). This is where we perhaps differ from Paulo Freire who rejects any such

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<sup>798</sup> The term “praxis” here refers to reflection and action as a composite act aimed at socio-moral transformation. Though it has a long tradition dating back to the Greeks (Plato and Aristotle), and adapted by philosophers of different stripes including Hanna Arendt (*The Human Condition*, 1958). We are adopting it here with the belief that it represents the proper mode for human learning – the encounter between idea and practice. An idea that claims to have a bearing on human life is meaningless unless tested and proven to be relevant to it. And an action that proceeds “thoughtlessly” is not truly human until it is backed up by reflection or deliberation. *Praxis* here is the interaction of reflection and action with an aim to transform its subjects to an ever better pattern of thought and action. It is a concept that already finds a home in every African community “palaver” but needs formalization.

bifurcation. Traditionally, there is a distinction between the *planting*, *weeding*, and *harvesting* times, even though they are but distinct moments in one and integral farming cycle. So also this model will maintain an internal consistency with this traditional model by ensuring a distinction between the three stages of the process while stressing their integral relationship.

The proper “harvest” of this model is a deeper level of moral probity for a greater number of the population. This is foundational to the realization of other anticipated “fruits” of the process. These other fruits include, but not limited to “psychological” and “religious” freedom, which describes the unshackling of the different forms of inner inhibitions and insecurities that together constitute the deepest forms of mental enslavement that still afflicts our people. For example, we identified “tribalism” as prejudice based on native insecurities. We also pointed out the need for a deeper investigation into the “pathologies” associated with religious practices (like witchcraft, sorcery, cultism, spiritism, among others).<sup>799</sup> While efforts to counter the negative assertions regarding Africa have their value, but most end up as mere apologetics unless we really disprove these assertions by way of positive results in the continent. That means the need to concentrate on building for effectiveness in all our institutions. Results-oriented strategy speaks louder than rhetoric – for results speak for themselves – good or bad results. For example, one can argue convincingly that Africa has a set of different parameters for judging the effectiveness of her institutions. Whatever those parameters are, its value will be based on its capacity to deliver better quality of life to the majority of African people. If it is proven to

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<sup>799</sup> We noted earlier that Elochukwu E. Uzukwu’s recent book on the subject of “spirits” is an invaluable contribution to this need for greater clarity about our beliefs and practices. While arguing for a “creative, pneumatological synthesis,” he does hold a caveat on “romanticizing” all of our history (and we interpret that to include all our beliefs and practices). See, *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2012)p. 60

promote why we have a laundry list of bad leaders or poor administration of our resources, then common sense would consider such parameter part of the problem. A result-oriented strategy is a pragmatic orientation to problem solving that is not only a common sense approach but one that has deep roots in the African psyche (plurality of gods) and so needs to be retrieved.

The “harvest” we seek is a condition that reverses of the all the negatives we see in Nigeria today. We insist that this is possible through a pain-staking deconstruction of some of our old assumptions, beliefs, and practices. It is like rebuilding a city after a devastating war. Some of the buildings have to come down to create space for a new and better one. The analogy Jesus used for “new wine in new wine skin”<sup>800</sup> is perhaps an appropriate metaphor here. We need to be wise enough to know when the old wine is no longer appropriate for new wineskin. The “harvest” is reaped at three discernible levels: moral (or empowerment), psychological and spiritual freedom, and material manifestations in form of a functional social system that flows directly from good leadership.

So, the “harvest” is the cumulative effect of building more effective social institutions using as pillars *the primary agency of active moral communities*, “one village at a time”.<sup>801</sup> It is a community where people are not merely well informed of the benefits of building such a community, but are properly motivated to build it, and so participate *actively* in its realization. The process takes time but the fruits of that effort are predictable. They know the consequences of actions we have condemned in this study and they hold the members of their community

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<sup>800</sup> Matthew 9:17, Luke 5:37

<sup>801</sup> Goerge B. N. Ayittey made this suggestion in a presentation on “Ted Talks,” for an African renaissance that takes Africa back from the “hippos” and “cheetahs,” terms he used to describe the kleptomaniacs in political leadership in the continent.

accountable for their actions. They ask relevant questions and demand accountability from their leaders. Accountable leadership invests in building and maintaining credible institutions.

Ultimately the *harvest* is social transformation. It cannot be otherwise if diligently implemented.

Obviously, the “three-stage-process” as explained above implies skill-sets that cut across different disciplines and practices. Therefore, the role of theologians, philosophers, journalists, and social scientists are not more important than that of local activists, pastors, imams, and other town folks involved in the process at the local level but rather each role is equal and complementary to the others. This point cannot be overemphasized particularly in the Nigerian setting where utmost value is placed on “positions” of authority. It is part of the goals of the process to *deconstruct the mindset that thrives on acquiring a laundry list of irrelevant “titles” just to “feel” or “seem” more important than the average person.*<sup>802</sup> Therefore, as noted above, even a hint of physical or intellectual hierarchy or superiority within the process will defeat its primary objectives. Those who lead the dialogue are not “directors” who dictate their ideas and ‘force’ it through to the masses. As Freire argues, such approach would turn the leaders into oppressors themselves and any change that results from such is inauthentic and objectionable.<sup>803</sup>

Perhaps, it is right to point out that eventually all human communities, irrespective of context, will need to pay close attention to “generative themes” that promote “selflessness” given that “self-interest” is at the core of all domination (practiced by the oppressor and oppressed

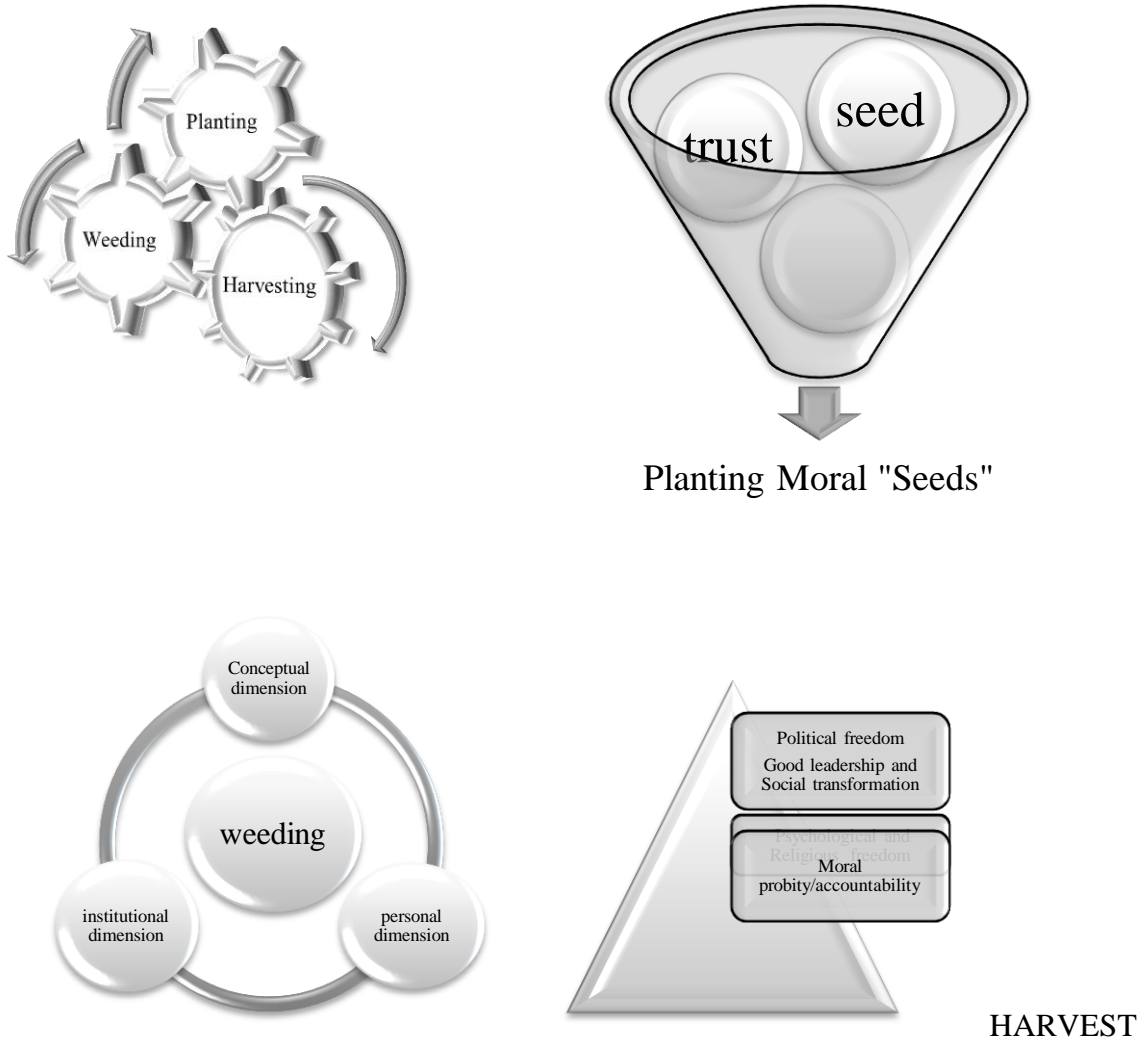
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<sup>802</sup> It is a common practice to see people pile-up ridiculous titles like “Chief, Dr, Barr, Sir, “X” OND, B.Sc. M.Sc., and OFR. KSJ, JP. Woe to the person who will introduce this person in public without mentioning all those titles! Is it difficult to see this as a self-image problem on a national scale? See a funny article by Ebele Orakpo, “Nigerians and the Craze for Titles,” Vanguard Newspapers (online edition), <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2010/09/nigerians-and-the-craze-for-titles/>

<sup>803</sup> See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, *Ibid.* pp. 125-135

alike), all tribal or racial prejudices (present in developing and developed worlds), and all socio-moral pathologies identifiable in any given culture. We have argued that conscience is the natural mechanism in our nature that enables self-transcending growth towards selflessness. Therefore, whatever helps discourage *excessive* self-interest promotes selflessness; and whatever promotes selflessness promotes the formation of authentic conscience and vice versa. Hence, the ultimate goal of this dialogical process is to reform conscience and promote selflessness. We provide simple illustrations of the process below in figures 4 through 7:

FIGURES 4-7: ILLUSTRATING THE “THREE-STAGE-PROCESS”<sup>804</sup>



<sup>804</sup> These illustrations are similar to the one in chapter 3 where *local* and *international tribalism* defined more simply as “institutionalized self-interest” are primary drivers of systemic corruption (in Nigeria). Our response to this (and other) socio-moral disease[s] is reformation of conscience through the dialectics of the three-stage-process: “planting-weeding-harvesting”. They are conceptual models that serve as vehicles that drive *critical dialogue* in the process of *reverse socialization aimed at reforming conscience* and achieving social transformation. The illustration differentiates the segments of the process to underscore the integral relationships they share. A funnel is used for the “planting” process given that it is a about sieving out the proper “seed” through an information flow (education of conscience) enabled by critical dialogue or “palaver”. The “weeding” process is of greater critical importance and perhaps with wider extensions for Nigerian and African societies.

### 5.2.1.2 **DEVELOPING AN ADEQUATE SYSTEM OF PHILOSOPHY**

Philosophy is said to be the “handmaid” of theology for obvious reasons. We are convinced that Africa needs to gradually, but systematically, develop a coherent system of philosophy that represents a necessary logical transition that replaces “oral philosophy” or “sage wisdom” as a body of knowledge that guides its life and practices. It is refreshing to know that African scholars are now philosophizing in their own rights rather than spending time debating whether there is an African philosophy/philosopher or not. Though it is possible to leap-frog to systematized theology at this time, but it will be grossly inadequate given that such a project will have to depend mainly on borrowed philosophical categories developed for a different historical context and therefore would be to that extent estranged from African realities.

The value of a coherent system of philosophy is that it provides the logical framework for articulating an adequate political philosophy or ideology and formulating a coherent ethic and theology. Part of the reason for the unstable nature of political institutions in Africa today is rooted in the lack of a coherent and/or consistent political philosophy or ideology. There is democracy but some call it “democracy” because most political parties represent a plethora of ideologies with no real discernible core values that differentiate one from the other. The lack of a core value implies a visionless political posturing that overtime proves itself incapable of delivering any visible dividends of democratic governance. Without a core value there is no commitment to the people. Yes, “ideas build a nation”.

Moreover, part of the role of a coherent system of philosophy is to purify the content of intellectual consciousness. It enables a transition from compactness to differentiation such that the content of beliefs and practices are regularly sieved to purify them of their unhealthy and

stultifying qualities or categories. There are many traditional beliefs and practices that Nigerians and Africans have been able to discard as a result of Christian evangelization efforts (keeping of slaves, the ostracism of the “Osu,” someone dedicated to a deity, and killing of twins among the Igbos are but few instances). But there are many more beliefs and practices that refuse to be dislodged from our individual and collective psyche except through a coherent and consistent reflective effort that formal philosophy enables. For example, there are many stories (lore) and proverbs that encapsulate deep rooted albeit unhealthy beliefs that define practices. We shall examine a few (stories and proverbs) in the next segment to underscore this point and also expose their implication for moral formation and practices.

### **5.2.1.3 REVIVING MORAL COMMUNITIES: RETRIEVING MORAL VOICES**

There is a hidden treasure in African communalism. It is a concept that captures a fundamental truth about life. It affirms that “relationality”<sup>805</sup> is at the very heart of creation and the core element of socio-cultural evolution. There is deep insight (albeit undeveloped) in the African belief that personhood cannot be defined apart from the community or social relationships. In other words, our subjectivity is community bound. Therefore, while acknowledging our critique of a possible exaggeration in the claim: “*We are, therefore, I am,*” we still identify it as capturing an original insight of the essential constitutive principle of subjectivity, personhood and community. However, what has happened is that African communalism, stifled by tragic historical constraints (inter-tribal wars and slave trade;

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<sup>805</sup> E. E. Uzukwu affirms that “relationality” is the conceptual paradigm for a deeper understanding of the African Universe of meaning. He argues, “The principle of relationship or the idea of relationality is converted into the measure of all things. The fundamental assumption that reality is plural – dual or twinned, multiple or a combination of twinned components – structures the human access to the universe.” See E. E. Uzukwu, *God, Spirit, and Human Wholeness, Loc. Cit.*, p. 10.



colonialism and dictatorships; poverty and disease) has *evolved a paradoxical individualism at the core of communalism instead of a self-transcending altruism that an authentic “communalism” would have actualized.*<sup>806</sup> In other words, constantly pushed to the brinks of survival, they were forced by their circumstances to strive for survival, and take refuge only within the limits of each defined circle of trust – the family, clan, and tribe. It becomes obvious why tribalism still holds strong in all African nations. The culprit then is historical isolationism. Just as *personhood (as subjectivity) is destroyed by isolationism or individualism, community (as “nationhood”) is destroyed by tribalism; but both could be healed by a more extensive sense of “communion” in true communalism.* This implies that the walls of tribalism that promotes isolationism must fall if a holistic psychosocial emancipation will be realized.

There is need to identify and then *retrieve, revive, or “reincarnate”* some essential traditional values we have lost or losing in most Nigerian (and African communities). For instance, among the Igbos, traditional title holders were known to be men of highest moral integrity. The recipients of the *Ọzọ* title (called *Ndị Nze*) were traditionally believed to be incapable of telling lies or acting unjustly.<sup>807</sup> This might sound naïve, as it seems to exaggerate the human capacity for moral uprightness. However, given that it had functioned well in the past in upholding both personal and social integrity, it underscores the essential role, if not the “capacity”, of the moral community in instilling and sustaining socio-moral values. This research has affirmed that a community without a moral voice will destroy the moral compass of its

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<sup>806</sup> This assertion is worthy of deeper investigation in post-doctoral research.

<sup>807</sup> Unfortunately, this is no longer case. The proof of this is affirmed at a Jubilee celebration recently where the presiding chairman of the occasion, in a rare act of courage asked the people if the claim “*Onye Nze anaghị eghe asị* (the Nze person does not lie) still holds true? There was a roaring “Noooooo!” from the audience.

constituents. The inherent values in traditional socio-moral institutions like these needs to be retrieved or new ones *reinvented*.

#### 5.2.1.4`      **Grace and Human Initiative**

Africa as a whole believes in the spiritual dimension of all life. Africans generally believe by default that “divine help” is needed for every success. We have noted the Igbo aspect of this reality (only in passing) in our analysis of personhood. An Igbo proverb captures an aspect of this as belief in “divine favor”: *Okūbalū ma’chi ekwehe (He that works hard but his chi refuses [him success])*.<sup>808</sup> We admit the need for divine help in all human efforts towards transformation. We acquiesce to the *imperative of grace* as Augustine and Aquinas have argued forcefully in the Christian tradition.<sup>809</sup> We however maintain that what is lacking in the African situation is not necessarily the divine dimension but the human cooperation. We are inclined to argue here of the importance of context. The historical context of the Nigerian (and African) narrative complexifies their inner response to both grace and natural endowments. The “value confusion” we see in the continent confirms this. As it is, there is rather too much religiosity than its lack, too much orientation to “spirits” than its lack, too much prayer than its lack.<sup>810</sup> There is a

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<sup>808</sup> This echoes Psalm 127:1 “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.” Uzukwu, Achebe, and Nwodo (all are cited in our analysis of Personhood) argue forcefully in their analysis of *Chi* (the personal deity charged with individual destiny) on the necessity of divine favor for any success in life. See particularly Nwodo, *Philosophical Perspectives*, Loc. Cit., pp. 265-269

<sup>809</sup> Stephen J. Duffy provides a historical analysis of Augustine and Aquinas teaching on grace in *The Dynamics of Grace: Perspectives in Theological Anthropology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), pp. 75-120

<sup>810</sup> We commend E.E. Uzukwu’s recent contribution to the ongoing effort at clarifying these “ambiguities” (in *God, Spirits, and Human Wholeness*, *Op. Cit.*). While admitting the complexity involved, he suggests a “patient pedagogy” as Africans gradually evolve their God-human experience (see Uzukwu, *ibid*, pp. 58-59, 221-222). He is right. The God-experience cannot be forced if it must be real and wholesome. Nevertheless, we think there is need to ask if it is not proper to acknowledge the other aspect of this “duality,” in that we are inclined to view his endorsement of “plurality” of gods and spirits, (see p. 54, 59), and subsequent effort at clarifying how we view these myriad of “spirits” in African religion as one that will generate debate in years to come. It is a beautiful piece of

debilitating *compactness* that suffocates any effort at clarity in critical domains of life. Without sufficient clarity, even simple problems could easily transform into monstrosities.

For example, it is believed that the African cannot be separated from his religion. He is suffused with the “spirit” of religion. It is our view that there is need for clarity about the many “spirits” that are operative in communities in Africa, and perhaps “exorcising” some of these “spirits” from the African psyche and communities would do us a lot of good. At the beginning of this research we noted the deep sense of fear that exists in the African mind evoked by a deep seated belief in “witchcraft,” and other “dark forces”. Many nations in the West have in the past systematically purged themselves of these “fears” even through some unorthodox methods, like the “witch hunting” episodes in Europe.

Nigeria [and Africa] needs to find a way to liberate itself from their native fears of the “unknown”. To reduce this phobia to merely “superstitious mentality” is a simplistic approach to the problem that we cannot advocate because we recognize the existence of forces of evil that are *active* in our world. What needs to be investigated is whether the evident preponderance of “spirits” activity in Africa is an “infestation” or a blessing. If an “infestation,” does it feed on ignorance, exaggerated religiosity, or both? What *conditions* make “spirits” infestation possible?

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research. We are at the same time convinced of the need for continuous effort at greater clarity in the direction of “discernment of spirits.” There is a greater need than ever to distinguish ever more clearly “good spirits” from “evil spirits”. As it is, there seems to be at the moment too much of the activities of the latter in the Nigerian experience. O. Kalu have noted the “precariousness” of human life in Africa due to the activities of “evil spirits,” “angry gods,” and “vengeful ancestors,” that cause “all forms of misfortune, illness, death, [business] failure.” See O. Kalu, *African Cultural Development* (Enugu: Fourth Dimensions Publishers, 1978), p. 30, J. Obi Oguejiofor categorizes “evil spirits” as “far more numerous, more dangerous and fearful than any other group of Supernatural beings”. See *The Influence of Igbo Traditional Religion on the Socio-political Character of the Igbo* (Nsukka: Fulladu Publishing Company), p. 85. Scholarly efforts towards clarity should not only aim at identifying inherent values in our traditional practices but also a critical reassessment of these “values” in the light of how it empowers or stultifies our growth and development as a people. That will imply identifying or developing some standards or criteria for such an assessment if what is obtainable outside of Africa (Western views) is considered tainted.

Any practical solutions to the problem should include vigorous education, legislation, an indigenous but *systematized investigation* and subsequent prosecution of *death-dealing* “sorcerers,” “shamans” and “witchdoctors” and their cohorts in crime. That their activities still constitute a daily experience in countries like Nigeria is worrisome in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We are however convinced that the greatest priority is a *differential imperative* that enables greater masses of people make clearer distinctions about the role of “spirits” and ‘religion’ in their overall development. It matters *what you believe in*. Part of the goal of Christianity is to purify the content of faith. The transition from faith in “spirits” to an absolute faith in God is one that Nigerians need to *purify* and *liberate* their psyche from its “origins” but this may take time.

#### **5.2.1.5            IMPLICATION OF GLOBAL ANALYSIS: A SHIFT TO A NEW ETHIC**

The lesson of globalization is to highlight the essential unity of the human family. It makes visible the hidden reality of an organic relationship between all peoples and all nations. It is perhaps a movement towards the unification of the human family and of all creation. It should generate an ever increasing sense of expectancy that erupts in joy when its goals are realized. Therefore the collapsing borders ought not to generate a new phobia leading towards new forms of individualistic isolationism but to a new freedom towards global *communion*, the goal of true *communalism* that Africa models even if so poorly. It liberates us from our stultifying parochial self-interests to a new sense of “sharing” of our gifts, talents, resources, and blessings. The fullness of the earth and of ourselves is there to be discovered, appreciated, and shared.

Proper “sharing” happens among friends. Aristotle thinks that the goal of the state is to make “friends” of its citizens because that is only when the State is safe. Extrapolate that to the global commonwealth. The collapsing borders calls attention to what we have neglected in our

relationships – the need to promote *intra* and *inter* racial or tribal “friendships” as against mere political “alliances” across local and international borders. The former is relationship developed by promoting equality, fairness, and justice; the other is a marriage of convenience brokered to protect strategic interests of the parties sometimes at the detriment of equality, fairness, and justice. It is therefore not globalization that generates the present phobia but rather the coming to consciousness of this neglected dimension of our relationships. It is the affirmation that our collective “conscience” still speaks deep within us (in the depth of our hearts, and in the midst of our community) sometimes accusing, judging, condemning, counseling, directing or prescribing. We need to listen to this voice from our depths, and following its guidance would help us loose nothing in the end except our fear.

We have recommended a paradigm shift towards a new ethic that guides international relations and the crafting of foreign policies in a globalizing world. This ethic believes in a fundamental *equality* and *fraternity* of all peoples and therefore eschews any framework or method characterized by domination or subordination of one group over and against the other. It acknowledges the interpenetration and integration of all life, especially human life, such that the action of one affects all; the action or inaction of one nation (or government) in some ways affects or influences events and/or behaviors in others – even those far away. While we recognize the inherent pull towards self-interest in inter-personal and corporate relationships as a critical factor of our nature that often define these relationships, we at the same time point to the rational exigency that requires a *deliberate shift* towards a more disinterested approach for the sake of our common heritage.

We recognize the inherent difficulty (if not the naivety) of reversing a long tradition of statecraft often based solely on “strategic self-interest,” but given its tragic history of disastrous effects (the root cause of all wars, revolutions, rebellions, and recent global economic meltdown), and the need to proactively harness the inherent positive elements in ongoing globalization, it will be foolhardy not to reverse course or at least engage in a holistic re-evaluation of our policy of engagement. The United States for instance, in the light of its experience, needs to re-evaluate the “wisdom” of a foreign policy that leads it to squander trillions of dollars of tax payers’ money and the precious lives of thousands of its citizens in a war of attrition that it can only pretend to win. The only “winners” are those who “lobby” for it – the very few individuals and/or owners of corporations who benefit from providing the weapons or enjoy the spoils of war (in reconstruction contracts).

It might sound naïve, but the *other* real “winners” are the pioneers of *Al Quarda* whose real goal is perhaps to *bankrupt* America and the West by drawing them out to an endless war. They seem to have already succeeded (even if only partly) by subtle manipulation of the psychological “insecurities” or “phobias” of America and its allies as evident in their insatiable need for “ego massage” that often leads them to a false sense of “military might” that then easily ensnares them. In all their wisdom, they do not seem to see the same script played out in the disintegration of USSR. Currently the United States is tethering at the brink of economic collapse with burgeoning debt-problems that threaten the very future of its citizens. European Union is held together by a slender thread that could snap any day due to serious economic

difficulties.<sup>811</sup> We insist that the future of these nations and the world as not in war but in rebuilding a network of true friendships.

Therefore, the paradigm shift that we propose recognizes the benefits of promoting authentic friendship across national and ethnic boundaries that is primarily “other” related. When the foundational ethic of engagement is “self-oriented” or *refractive*, it manipulates or distorts all relationships to benefit the self/nation; but in the end, this strategy does prove to be (or will ultimately prove to be) defeatist or self-destructive precisely because it thrives on generating discontent and creating enemies.

Conversely, an ethic of engagement that is “other” related is not in real terms a “strategy” but a “relationship”. It establishes a normal human relationship with another entity that brackets all preconceived bias and “open” to encounter the “other” in the fullness of *being* and accommodate growth and development within the parameters of a normal human relationship. It is therefore supportive of whatever it considers “ethically healthy” in the ongoing relationship and *firmly opposes* whatever it understands as an unhealthy ethical practice. This is the basis of a love relationship in personal encounters that forms the basis for intra and inter-national and cooperate relationships. Though this approach is open to the setbacks of normal interpersonal relationships but it is also inherently less prone to generating antagonism over time. Canada seems to stand out as a nation that has built a reputation for itself (as friend of many nations) even though it adopts only a rudimentary model of this kind of relationship in its foreign policy.

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<sup>811</sup> We quickly note that the economic problems of EU states cannot be traced to war expenses as against the situation of the United States that have spent over a trillion dollars in the last decade on War alone.

She therefore has very few antagonisms because she has generated few enemies in its relationships.<sup>812</sup>

This paradigm shift in relationship would therefore resist the attempt to support (directly or indirectly) unethical practices where its perceived interests are involved knowing that it tarnishes one's credibility in the short term and not cost effective in the long term given the astronomical cost of damage control measures.

### 5.2.1.6 The Contribution of Our Research to Scholarship

The contribution of this research to scholarship may be summarized under five points:

Firstly, it retrieves the idea that we are *responders* to what is done to us. This insight is particularly poignant in a world that is increasingly aggressive. Aggression is often a reaction to one's life situations and frustrations. If we increasingly treat others well in our relationships, beyond the face-to-face encounters to relationships between nations, there is a high probability that we will have less aggression at local and international levels. This research calls us to pay

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<sup>812</sup> It is arguable that Canada's foreign policy approach is determined by its position in the world – a medium power. By the same logic, it implies that United States' foreign policy approach is based on its position as the sole *super power* in the world today. That seems to be a fair argument. However, such a view presumes that a "super power" position necessarily generates "super enemies" by default. We do not accept this myth. Rather, we assert that the attitude one adopts while "in power" makes all the difference as to the response one gets in return. It is similar to the attitude of great emperors or monarchs of history, even if they were rare. They were either loved or hated to the degree their attitude or approach to leadership *inspires* or *spites* respectively. Moreover, if humans today have an improved sense of morality, as history suggests, then our leadership ethic ought to catch-up with our times. Communication technology (particularly the Media) has changed the way we live in significant ways, including the way great leaders lead. Media "images" shape not just public opinion globally, but significantly impact people's *perception* of a "super power" like United States. By constantly projecting an image of a "powerful war machine" (a super strong nation) that punishes ruthlessly its enemies, a "war monger" or "oppressor" *image* is created that leaves it more and more vulnerable in a globalizing world. It gives easy tools to its enemies. It needs to rediscover or project more of its "soft-power tools" against a global enemy: not more drones or any of its war "toys," but more of its "benevolent" leadership. Unfortunately, the war of attrition has drained away most of the juice at a time it needs it for image laundering. The wars has rendered the nation too broke to care as a *super power* should. It is the hope of this research that United States goes back to the drawing board to rediscover what makes it truly great. In our opinion, it is not military might, but its ability to inspire hope to the hopeless, to provide help to the needy, and to give voice to the voiceless. This is possible when it "listens" to that inner voice we call conscience. And we have argued that this voice is activated in a moral community that has not lost its own voice.



attention to how we treat others. This insight is particularly important to powerful nations of the global North that often take their relationship with the weaker countries of the South for granted.

Secondly, we were able to indicate how conscience influences our lives beyond what we admit – it brings meaning and direction to our lives through the values it helps us promote. We identified how an emphasis on the cognitive aspect of conscience has obfuscated the deeper aspect of feeling in motivating behavior. We forged a link between our feelings and conscience both in its formation and its influence on our behavior such that we are what our conscience is. We argue that *even when we do not listen attentively to our consciences it still shapes who we are, and even when we do not admit to its relevance, it still shapes who we become*. We therefore retrieved its role as the doorkeeper of personal probity and socio-moral responsibility.

Thirdly, this research apart from distinguishing *shame* and *guilt* identified the need to retrieve the sense of shame in African Communities. The reason is that “shame” acts as a powerful *external* mechanism for moral sanctions that complements the role of conscience as an *internal* sanction. However, given the influence of Western moral standards on African moral orientation, the value of traditional *taboos* have lost their power to sanction behavior. The result is that we have now evolved a political class that has lost a sense of shame for committing atrocities. Hence *we affirm the need to retrieve critical elements in the traditional system of shame in Africa if we are to recover or retain our fast vanishing deepest values*. African ethical system is communalistic and without a system of shame in place the entire edifice crumbles precisely because individual conscience has little meaning or force apart from the mechanism of community shame or sanctions. If active, they complement and reinforce each other; if passive, both fail.

Fourthly, while we recognize the inherent value in *kinship solidarity* as a socio-cultural institution that helps to protect and safeguard the values and privileges of different ethnic communities, we warn that when this kinship solidarity by undue prejudice, perverts the very reason for its existence, it becomes self-destructive. Therefore we brought attention to the pathology we call “tribalism” and exposed how this is destroying the fabric of moral formation and constituting the primary driver of systemic corruption in Nigeria (and other African countries).

Fifthly, we identified a new form of tribalism – “international tribalism” as a form of kinship of interest that is gradually disrupting good governance in developed countries like the United States, and impacting the moral orientation of local communities by virtue of their wider reach that globalization enabled. When cooperate groups or governments pursue their “strategic interests” at a significant detriment to the well-being of ordinary people, they activate a form of tribalism that is even more dangerous to our world (because of the extensive harm they can cause by virtue of their reach and power, like the *global recession*) than what is obtainable at the local level. Moreover, history proves that imperialist forces have influenced tribal genocide by their actions in the past (Rwanda/Burundi genocide and the slave trade are two serious instances).

Sixthly, we argue that African view of personhood favor holism rather than individualism. We identified relationship as the critical window for understanding African orientation to moral probity. The concept of Ubuntu provides us the link between personhood, communalism as “relationship,” and socio-moral responsibility. We argue that while African communalism as the matrix for the protection and realization of the ends of community, however, tribalism injects toxicity into that context such that prejudice and distrust not only

erases the dividends of communalism but disrupts the formal mechanism of conscience formation to the degree it (tribalism) becomes a core driver for systemic corruption.

Finally, we provided a methodology that will enhance mass mobilization in traditional agrarian communities like Nigeria. It is an original construct that is yet to be given full articulation which when fully developed will become a critical tool for social emancipation and a buffer against systemic corruption.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

As we come to the end of our research, we wish to delineate the critical conclusions of this study keeping in mind that there are specific *recommendations* and *conclusions that we* expressed in the different chapters that cannot be accommodated here due to scope limitations:

1. Our search for the “roots” of moral [ir-] responsibility underscores the fact that we are primarily neither “builders,” nor “inventors” but “responders”. We respond to others based on how we “interpret” their actions towards us. We have noted that this interpretation is not merely “cognitive,” but involves how we “feel” about that action. In normal human relationships, actions that show concern, care, fairness, affection, trust, respect, honesty, acceptance, friendship, among others, are considered “responsible” actions and often elicit similar responses. In other words, a responsible action evokes a reciprocal response and vice versa. Therefore, responsibility or irresponsibility would ordinarily replicate itself in a community of moral agents based on our actions or attitude towards others. In this way, we shape “who” people become – either responsible or irresponsible people. It will be naïve to expect otherwise.

2. We affirm that the influence of conscience on our moral behavior is significant but *grossly underestimated*. The reason we adduced for this is a historical scholarly fixation on the cognitive aspect of conscience in particular, and human judgment in general that consistently overlooks the significant influence of feelings not just in our everyday practical judgments but even more importantly in the processes of conscience. Our analysis on psychopathy (chapter one) reveals that “lack of *feelings* of conscience” as a central part of the psychopath’s profile or identity. Our emotional intelligence enables us to have moral “feelings” of a social nature (as expressed in empathy, compassion, or concern for others) that this research associates with the

reality of conscience such that its lack implies the disabling of our natural capacity to “feel” *with* and *for* “others”. In other words, our ability to be “sensitive” to how others “feel” about our attitudes or actions towards them puts a moral check on us and enables us to act responsibly towards them. The lack of this “feeling” implies a disabled or deactivated conscience and a symptom of a serious psycho-moral disease or pathology. Hence, the inability to feel “existential guilt” (rightly ascribed to conscience, distinct from “neurotic guilt”) for our misconduct is not a sign we have “outgrown” conscience but rather a sign of serious psycho-moral ill-health.

3. We stress that conscience is a naturalized “mechanism” in us that enables us to self-transcend our native impulses to selfishness, which is a central defect in our nature leading to irresponsibility. It is “naturalized” in the sense that it is a capacity that is developed in us through the interaction of “nature” (our natural endowments) and “nurture” (socio-cultural environment). We have shown in our analysis of the relationship between conscience and the moral community that this capacity develops properly in an ideal community: one with an “active moral voice”. This ideal community is one that still maintains a degree of “solidarity” or “kin feelings” with its members such that each member participates in moral formation of its constituents by demanding mutual accountability. It implies that “critical dialogue” is a necessary feature of an ideal moral community. A community without an active moral voice, where people are afraid to criticize the wrongdoings of its members, gradually experiences moral stagnation expressive in a spike in “self-interest” that is often sort at the detriment of the “common-interest” of all.

4. We affirm with Ratzinger that conscience is “an anamnesis of origins,” an “original memory” of the good and true. However, we argue that while this “original memory” is *innate*, it is only “in relationship” with “others” in an active moral community that it becomes activated

and elicited<sup>813</sup>. In other words, it takes an “openness” to the “within” and “without” (a willingness to *listen* to our deeper selves and to “others” through reflection and “creative dialogue”) that we both *form* and *hear* the authentic voice of our consciences. It is in “creative dialogue” (in our “interaction” or “relationship” with others) that God’s voice is ever *mediated* to us such that we hear it both deep in ourselves and in the “voice” of others within the ideal moral community. However, this “voice” is ever in need of purification since it is only a “mediated” voice of God. As such, it is an “absolute” voice of God *only* to its subject. While it is indeed the final moral arbiter for practical judgment for the individual moral subject, it is ever in need of formative education in creative dialogue with its relevant moral community. We *mediate* God’s “voice” to one another in an ideal moral community. The aim of that “voice” of conscience is to ever urge us to *care* about how we treat others, to make sacrifices for one another, to live responsibly - that is, to ever make effort to self-transcend.

Of course this self-transcending process finds its ultimate expression in a deeper relation with God that is the proper orientation to living a responsible and righteous life, a life in accord with God’s will. So, when that voice of conscience is stifled, care for others and obeying God’s commands becomes a burden rather than a moral imperative. It then happens that without an active conscience, we lose both our “feelings” for others and a proper respect for God’s commands. Paradoxically, we become “naturalized” psychopaths.<sup>814</sup> In other words, as William

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<sup>813</sup> Though this is best realized in an ecclesial community but an authentic conscience can still be formed outside of it so long as there is openness to the true and good in dialogue with others in a morally sensitive community.

<sup>814</sup> We use this term “naturalized psychopath” to express a reverse situation of what happens when conscience is not allowed to play its normal role in our life. It not only captures the reality of what it means “to act without conscience” but also underscores the fact that so long as we are “sensitive” to our moral obligations towards others, and we care about their wellbeing, we are actually being influenced by our conscience even though we do not admit its influence explicitly or even deny such influence explicitly. It means conscience is not just about “guilt feeling” but even more so about our “good feelings” towards others. It is the seat of our moral sensibility.

Spohn observed above, conscience is more than involved in our decisions because it is so integral to our life that we become what our conscience is. We “become what we do” since our character is shaped by the *quality* of our consciences even when we do not admit its influence in our lives. To deny conscience is to deny our real self.

5. We assert that “communalism” represents a theoretical African conceptualization of the ideals of community that ironically is yet to find a home or authentic expression in the lived experience of most African communities. We questioned the authenticity of the claims of “communalism” (as encapsulated in the phrase, “*because we are, therefore I am*”) suggesting a deep bond with the community and concern for its wellbeing as a present practice in African communities (and nations) given the preponderance of venal leadership across the landscape. We wondered why an ethical framework that is designed to counter self-interest or views *greed* as a central vice generate such class of leaders that exhibit an insatiable appetite for greed even to ridiculously insane proportions (as in the Nigerian situation). The reason we adduced for this aberration is the “virus” of “tribalism” that *distorts the value inherent in true communalism*.

6. We hold strongly to the conviction that “tribalism” is the primary socio-moral “pathology” of most traditional societies but with particular emphasis on Nigeria. We argue that tribalism as primarily a *native prejudice* in relation to “others” outside the tribe practically disrupts the traditional process of moral formation, and at the core of this is the malformation of conscience. The functional category is its ability to generate distrust across tribal lines such that a healthy social integration becomes impossible. Given that “trust” is an essential quality in all human relationships, a moral formation process that excludes it in relation to others distorts not merely the “thinking” process towards prejudice, but even more pertinent is how it impacts how

we “feel” towards each other. When our thinking and feeling is skewed towards the negative about someone or a group of people, a profound “disconnect” is achieved that paves way to all conceivable atrocity towards them (the Biafran experience is a typical example).<sup>815</sup> We argue that the role of conscience as a “natural mechanism for self-transcendence” is to bridge this disconnect through its formation process that begins at childhood through adulthood. It involves finding one’s authentic “self” by losing oneself in others-“selves,” and the wider the extension, the better. *It is a formation in selflessness and self-sacrifice.* This can neither be achieved without “trust” nor in a climate of prejudice. Native “prejudice” that tribalism fosters ensure both. This is how tribalism that *irrationally* memes bias towards others significantly impacts the quality of conscience development in tribal societies. The same is the case in modern societies where “racism” is a fact of life. The result is a *stampede of self-interest* that we see in an array of venal leaders that have insatiable appetites for greed and insensitive to the suffering of the community (or nation) including their own kin.

7. We further affirm from the above that “tribalism” serves as a *primary driver* and *reinforcement* for systemic corruption in Nigeria. It is possible the same is the case in other African countries, and other tribal societies. We argue that given the climate of mutual distrust among different ethnic communities that tribalism fosters, forging a coherent *ethic of service (based on merit and integrity)* for the greater common good becomes a virtual impossibility. We argue that tribalism is not merely prejudice but a form of “institutionalized self-interest” at the local level. Therefore the privilege of public service becomes an “opportunity for looting” the national treasury since commitment is to the tribal periphery at the detriment of the center (state

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<sup>815</sup> We have noted in this research how Chinua Achebe affirmed recently in his one of his last writings, *There was a Country*, that the Biafran-Nigerian war is a genocide perpetrated against the Igbos based on tribal prejudice.



or nation). This is how the promotion of local “self-interest” at the detriment of the larger whole plays a significant part in the malformation of conscience at the political arena for adult moral agents. It explains how such adults will remain fixated at the lower levels of Kohlberg’s model of moral development.

8. Furthermore, we assert that given the fact that local tribal communities support and reward with “titles” their “sons” and “daughters” who stole public funds merely on the pretext that they are “one of us” inadvertently destroy the very foundation of traditional moral formation (that forms conscience) by “modeling” irresponsibility. This reverse “modeling” not only deactivates the community’s moral voice but actively corrodes the moral atmosphere that impact upon the character and behavior of its constituents. This, in our opinion, is the greatest harm tribalism does to the formation of the present and next generation of Nigerians (and Africans).

9. We hold strongly to the view that “international tribalism,” as a form of “institutionalized self-interest” projected to the global space, is a socio-moral “pathology” similar to local “tribalism” above. We conclude from our global analysis that just as local tribalism impacts negatively on the formation of individual consciences, international tribalism not only actively influences the moral orientation of local communities but also by injecting toxicity in the moral sphere impact upon the moral choices and behavior of its constituents. We provided ample examples to illustrate how international actors (consists of individuals, institutions, multinationals, and organizations representing nation-states) propelled by native or “strategic self-interest” often achieved at significant costs detrimental to the local community, influence outcomes in the local community (or other nation-states). Apart from enabling corruption (assisting in the looting of treasury in Nigeria), we noted the growing influence of “lobby

groups” in governmental policy decisions as a socio-political phenomenon that has serious moral implications if unchecked. We argue that this flowering of a new form of “tribe” that defend vested interests at all costs, often against the interests of the common good has proven its capacity to negatively impact our world through the sub-prime mortgage crisis that resulted in the global recession.

We highlighted how the collusion of *international* and *local tribalism*, sharing “kinship of interests” are directly and indirectly responsible for the emergence of a new breed of international actors like terrorists and scam artists. The logic is simple: irresponsibility begets irresponsibility in the long run. We therefore recommend a paradigm shift in foreign policy agenda away from *solely* “strategic-interests” towards compassionate engagement given the reality of reciprocity of conduct that globalization has enabled.

10. Our recommendations include, but not limited to a “glocalized”<sup>816</sup> moral reform that stresses the *internal content* of that reform.<sup>817</sup> We propose a unique method (the “three-stage-process”) that is tailored to meet the needs of largely uneducated agrarian societies of Nigeria (and perhaps Africa) but adaptable to the educated class. We hope that this method be part of a robust long-term strategy for moral reform in Nigeria (and perhaps Africa) that aims at *updating* conscience formation and raising moral consciousness by building *active* moral communities, one village at a time. Part of that reform agenda includes the critical re-evaluation of our received traditions in the light of their relevance to meet present needs.

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<sup>816</sup> As noted earlier we use this term to describe the interpenetration of the global in the local such that powerful nations and multinationals that have significant influence in other nations (like Nigeria) where they have interests can participate in a significant way in a reform agenda through their policies and actions.

<sup>817</sup> Part of that internal reform effort is the critical re-evaluation of received values encoded in behavior, practices, and symbols such that unhealthy aspects could be expunged and healthy practices retrieved or reinvented.

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