

1 Territorial morality

Dear D,

Essentially, there are two conflicting fields of morality or idealism. The first is old-fashioned territorial morality, of the kind promulgated in public schools and Catholic convents. Then there is neo-tribal morality, antagonistic both to high ability and to any possibilities of psychological development in a centralised or expansive direction. But even before starting to delineate these, I have to establish the extremely agnostic basis on which I operate.

The first stage in my awareness of the existential situation originated when I was about eleven. I had shocking perceptions of the unknowability of the existential situation in which one found oneself, and a realisation that the existential uncertainty¹ was the final term in any enquiry, philosophical or scientific, into the nature of things. This provided me with an extremely strong drive to react to the existential situation in the most purposeful way possible. Although all ascriptions of purpose were arbitrary and ultimately futile, in one sense it was fairly clear how to react to the situation.

I applied this observation, which I came to call the uncertainty principle, to any evaluations which I encountered which seemed to pass without question. The human race had evolved in the way it had, and it ran its affairs in the way it did; it was understandable enough that social groups should favour some kinds of behaviour as desirable, and others not. It was also understandable that people reacted in the ways they did as the resultant outcome of psychological forces, which were determined by evolution as well as their own experience of life and deliberate attempts to act in certain ways. So I was (and still am) a moral relativist. (Modern dictionaries of ethics say

¹ See Appendix II for a discussion of existential uncertainty.

you cannot be a moral relativist, because if you really were, you would start to commit crimes. So a moral relativist who does not commit crimes is insincere.)

I suppose that these elements in my position, along with my IQ, account for the exceptionally overt hostility which I aroused. I had a strong motivational drive which was not the result of social influence, and I was rigorously relativistic in my attitude to morality. In the same way that modern ethics denies the possibility of being a moral relativist, so modern psychology asserts that all motivation and personality attributes arise from rewards offered by the individual's environment.

Incidentally, the fact that statements of this level of unanalytical naivety are made by philosophers and psychologists in an academic context reflects the decline in the average IQ of those holding university positions, and ensures that the decline will continue, since what is required for academic success is sufficient uncriticalness to reproduce and imitate assertions of this kind.

When I was at school I never expressed my morally relativistic views, apart from the most generalised expositions of the existential uncertainty to one of the nuns at my convent (my maths teacher). However, I suppose that people sensed the unacceptability of my psychological position from an absence of the cues which most people give that they are really hooked on social approval or get some sort of emotional feedback out of the prevailing collective evaluations, probably most clearly indicated by moral indignation against nonconformists. Modern social psychology asserts that people derive their values from the group in which they are living, and clearly this is what modern society would like to be the case.

Constant reflection on the existential situation prevented me from acquiring the sort of moral indignation which most people seem to feel about certain things. This was partly the reason why I was soon an object of opprobrium myself, and have remained so ever since. By attempting to

provide myself with opportunities which society did not wish me to have, I qualified as a criminal.

Also I never acquired any idea of how society should ideally be. I thought that even if I could think of something that would be better, and provide me with better opportunities for doing research, I certainly did not have the resources to bring about political changes and then do research in one lifetime, so I had better concentrate on making the best use of the social structures as they were to get the necessary opportunities for doing research. Later I came to take a far more negative, and not merely agnostic, view of human psychology, and thought that it would be absolutely impossible to influence it in any positive direction. Its psycho-dynamics were such as to ensure negative outcomes whatever ideals it professed, as with the religion of love (Christianity) which had justified so much torturing and killing.

Another illustration of this was currently being provided by the modern society in which I lived, which called itself compassionate, and which was engaged on a programme designed to convince me of its absolute mercilessness towards me and my parents. When I was thrown out at the end of my education, I formulated this as, 'There is nothing so bad but that people will make it happen to you, nothing so bad that people will give you any help in averting it.'

People who subscribe to the modern belief in society like to associate 'ruthlessness' with acquisitiveness, whether of land-space or money. You could call this projection, in the Freudian sense. There is nothing so ruthless as the agent of the collective who lives for no reward in life but the exercise of power over other people.

Evidently human psychology has a tremendously strong reaction against the potential independence of the individual mind. There is plenty of historical evidence of this in its constant persecution of heretics and nonconformists, both before and after Bruno was burnt to death for saying that the universe was infinite. Persecutory drives are not absent from modern society, but more discreetly expressed, which does not mean less destructively.

Neo-tribal morality is universally dominant in schools (only a bit less so in private schools), in universities, in virtually all published material, and on the television screen. It is almost impossible to meet anyone who does not soon demonstrate allegiance to some aspect of it.

Nietzsche recognised approximately the distinction between territorial and tribal morality in his master/slave moralities, but being influenced by his own social environment, he did not get it quite right. I think it is true to say that he accepted the dichotomy too much on the terms of the tribal (Christian) morality of his time, as that between the expansively selfish and the unassuming compassionate, which is much the way it is perceived by the modern neo-tribal collectivist.

Moral indignation is directed at independence and autonomy, but more overtly at any territory, mental or physical, within which an individual can act independently of social pressures. So of course it is directed at capitalism and commercialism, as representing the possibility of acquisition by an individual of territory which is larger than that which tribal society is prepared freely to grant him. Indignation is also directed at any exercise of individual judgement within that territory. Hence it was inevitable, if my parents insisted on seeking social advice, that I would be taken away from the convent. Convents are second only to parents as objects of anti-authoritarian hatred.