

A PHILOSOPHICAL APPRAISAL OF THE POSSIBILITY OF GENERATIONAL CURSES FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF MORAL ORDER AND EPIGENETICS

Stephen A. Oguji & Charity Ifunanya Ogbodo

Abstract

This paper is an appraisal of the notion of the so called ancestral or generational curses - the notion that consequences of immoral or more particularly wicked actions of ancestors can affect the offspring negatively resulting in patterns of failure or negativity. The objective of the paper is to attempt to explain the possibility of generational curses from the perspectives of moral order and scientific theory of epigenetics. The paper, in the light of the scientifically observed cause and effect phenomena in the physical order, also assumes a cause and effect phenomenon in the moral order and secondly attempts to establish that generational repetition of patterns, otherwise understood as generational curses may just be epigenetic procedure. The paper drawing from the observed cause and effect phenomenon in the physical order, believes that similar cause and effect or consequences for actions also exists in the moral order but concludes that epigenetics is responsible for generational transfer of negative patterns or tendencies which produce negative results otherwise regarded as generational curses.

Keywords: generational curse, epigenetics, moral order, negative patterns, phenomena.

Introduction

Generational curse or ancestral curse or family curse is the notion that consequences of immoral or more particularly wicked actions of generations before can affect the present generation negatively resulting in patterns of failure or negativity. According to *Webster's Dictionary*, a generation is a "single step in the line of descent from an ancestor; the time between the birth of parents and the birth of their children."¹ From the same source, it is also learnt that a 'curse' is 'a prayer or invocation for harm or injury to come upon one.'² Therefore, 'generational curse' describes a negative invocation for

¹Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, (10th ed.), Springfield, M.A., Merriam Webster, 2018.

²Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary

injury inherited by a generation from a previous generation.³ According to Isaac Makashinyi in “The Truth Behind Generational Curses” a “generational curse or family curse or an ancestral curse or hereditary curse describes the cumulative effect on a person of things that their ancestors did, believed, or practiced in the past. It is a consequence of an ancestor's actions, beliefs, and sins being passed down.”⁴ A generational curse occurs as a pattern of negativity, failure, frustration, unfruitfulness running in a family. An example of a generational curse is repeated divorce in a family, addictions to things like drug/alcohol, sex; repeated mental illnesses such as depression, schizophrenia, bipolar depression and physical illnesses such as hypertension, heart disease, cancer), and even poverty to name a few.

In the notion of generational curse, it is believed that because some ancestors committed some atrocities like human sacrifice, forceful taking away someone's wife or land, meted injustice to the innocent, blocked someone's else progress, worshipped their local gods sometimes called idols and so on that the progress of their descendants is affected, setting in their trajectory different kinds of ill luck like business failure, marital ill luck, general life setbacks and misfortunes and generally moving from one problem to the other. Cursed people's lives are marked by stagnation, frustration or unfruitfulness; always struggling with ‘something.’ They maybe brilliant and hardworking, yet they make nothing out of it.

Timothy Ofoegbu, a foremost writer and curse breaking minister queries thus: “How does one explain that a family has history of violence, anger, untimely deaths and separation in marriages, chronic poverty or lack of favours from generation to generation.”⁵ Ofoegbu offers very moving examples of patterns running in a family as in the passages below:

A young man below 40 years suddenly dies leaving behind a bewildered widow, a confused mother and grieving friends. He was still expecting a child 10 years after his marriage and he was also the only child of the mother, a widow.

³Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary

⁴I. Makashinyi, “The Truth Behind Generational Curses” in *The Gospel Coalition*, TGC, African Edition, Jan, 2019, p.5,7.

⁵T. G. Ofoegbu, *Skeleton of the Ancestors: Heal Your Family Tree*, (Lagos: Anchor-Gold, 2010), 7.

A hardworking businessman who tries in vain to make it in life. Well connected, not extravagant, yet success in life eludes him as he daily counts his losses instead of blessing. No matter how he tries to revive the business and have a major breakthrough, it will seem that his entire business is covered with thick darkness. A building project he started with a great joy and zeal is now abandoned like a grave yard in his village or in the city.

A pretty educated young lady that hopes to settle down with a man of her dreams. The suitors are not coming and those that come, will come and break her heart with last minute disappointments. Some will dupe her; others will dump her. Some will abuse her, while others will refuse her.

A person is afflicted with a mysterious illness. The medical doctors insist that the person is normal, but what is needed is bed rest to calm the anxiety. But the person knows that he is walking in the valley of shadow of death. Life is ebbing away and sickness has a way of draining the wealth of the family. Hospital seems to be their second residential address.⁶

Ofoegbu offers other very moving historically verifiable examples of generational curses operating in a family line

The first is the story of the famous Chinese Karate star, Bruce Lee who was born on November 27, 1940. The uniqueness of Bruce Lee, the famous Karate film star began at his birth. His father died young. He was the only son of his father and he too had just only one son. Bruce Lee died at 33, a few days to the release of his film 'Enter the Dragon'. Many people believe there is a curse on Bruce Lee's family. Brandon, Bruce only child also died at the age of 28 when he was filming a new movie.⁷

Again

There is also the notorious curse story around the famous Kennedy family in the US. From assassination of President J.F. Kennedy in

⁶Ofoegbu. *Skeleton of the Ancestors*, 6.

⁷ Ofoegbu. *Skeleton of the Ancestors*, 7.

Dallas in 1963, to the death of his brother in a plane crash and several other difficult-to-explain tragedies in the Kennedy family.⁸

Furthermore, Ofoegbu offers the following stories of two generations of two well-known American families in the 19th century, one supposedly cursed, the other blessed as published by Mr E.E. Winship to illustrate the belief in the generational curse very well. Winship published studies which have been featured in many publications since the beginning of the 20th century, goes thus.

Max Jukes was an atheist who married a godless woman. Some 560 descendants were traced. Of these 310 died as paupers. 150 became criminals, 7 of them murderers. 100 were known to be drunkards. More than half the women were prostitutes. In all, the descendants cost the US government one and a quarter million 19th century dollars.

On the other hand, Jonathan Edwards was a contemporary of Max Jukes. He was a committed Christian who married a godly young lady. Some 1394 descendants were traced. Of these 295 graduated from college, from whom 13 became college presidents and 65 became professors. 3 were elected as United States Senators, 3 state governors and others sent as ministers to foreign countries. 30 were judges. 100 were lawyers, one the dean of an outstanding law school. 56 practiced as physicians, one was dean of a medical school. 75 became officers in the army and navy. 100 were known missionaries, preachers and prominent authors. Another 80 held some form of public office, of whom 3 were mayors of large cities. One was the comptroller of the US Treasury, another vice president of the United states. Not one of the descendants of the Edwards family was a liability to the government.⁹

Such stories and or experiences which some people claim that they do actually have are usually cited as evidence of generational curse in the lives of descendants as a result of immoral or wicked actions of their ancestors. It is indeed one of the reasons, for some people why there is evil in the world or in the lives of some people. Authors like Fr John Hampsch, Fr Stephen Njoku, Robert DeGrandis, John Eckhardt, Noel and Phil Gibson, Ogbu Uke Kalu,

⁸ Ofoegbu. *Skeleton of the Ancestors*, 8.

⁹ Ofoegbu. *Skeleton of the Ancestors*, 1

Paul L. Cox, G. Greenwald and of course already cited Timothy Godwin Ofoegbu to mention but a few, have written so much along these lines. These authors challenge the conventional positions that life is an existential cause and effect framework.¹⁰ For such people, many unfortunate human experiences like poverty, sickness, addiction etc., are attributable to generational curse.

The problem of this paper is that the notion of generational curse (that is that patterns of negativity usually run through a family as a consequence of actions of forebears) is usually difficult to reconcile with our everyday existential experience. In our experience, there are descendants of generations who were known to have committed heinous crimes and thus might have attracted curses to themselves and their descendants who are not evidently suffering any generational curse. The so-called immoral or wicked people and their descendants do not seem to receive their punishment at least as much the eye can see.

Historically, Britons of today have more terrible ancestors who did more terrible things than the ancestors of the present Africans, such that they (present Britons) should have been suffering dire consequences of generational curse than present Africans. It is on record that almost all the top British politicians from the 17th century till the 19th century were proud slave merchants. Clementina Egwolomena Ukiri, provided very detailed narration of the twists and hues of slave trade among top British politicians and business men.

A good example was John Hawkins who was a foremost English slave trader, a thief, and by contemporary moral standards can as well be called a terrorist. John Hawkins made three trips to West Africa in the 1560s, and stole Africans whom he sold to the Spanish in America. On returning to England after the first trip, his profit was so handsome that Queen Elizabeth I became interested in directly participating in his next venture; and she provided for that purpose a ship named *Jesus*. Hawkins left with *Jesus* to steal some more Africans, and he returned to England with such dividends that Queen Elizabeth made him a knight. Hawkins chose as his coat of arms the representation of an African in chains.¹¹

But the twist, surprising and disturbing reality as Ukiri continues is that:

¹⁰Ofoegbu. *Skeleton of the Ancestors*, xvii

¹¹ C. E. Ukiri. "Very Important Historical Facts-Think Seriously About this" in <https://www.thebarandbenchnews.com.ng/2020/12.very-important-historical-facts.html>

Today the generations of Hawkins and Queen Elizabeth I are alive and enjoying life from the proceeds of their evil ancestors. They are not evidently suffering any generational curse of their evil ancestors who were actively involved in the greatest evil –slavery- humanity has ever witnessed. These ancestors both sanctioned rape, kidnapping and mass murder, but their children don't bear "ancestral Curses" like black Africans. More than that, it is on record that 15 Lord Mayors of London, 25 sheriffs and 38 aldermen of the City of London were shareholders in the Royal Africa Company (RAC) between 1660-1690. The RAC alone was responsible for trafficking over 1.5million Negroes to Britain and twice that number to the Caribbean.¹²

Another example that quickly comes to mind according to Ukiri is:

David and Alexander Barclays who were active participants in the kidnapping and enslavement of millions of black Africans. As was standard practice at the time, the risky and long-term nature of transatlantic slave trading required new banking houses that could offer credits to prospective slave traders, for periods of between one and a half to three years. One bank that provided this service was run by Alexander and David Barclay: The Barclay Bank. Their bank still carries their name. The Barclay's Bank is also a proud sponsor of the English Premier league - Chelsea and Arsenal and Man United- that many people are fanatical fans of today.¹³

University College London's Legacies of British Slave Ownership Project shows that 10% to 20% of Britain's wealthy can be identified as having had significant links to slavery.¹⁴ Other banks and companies with links to slavery include: Royal Bank of Scotland, HSBC, Lloyds Banking Group. The Bank of England was also involved in the slave trade. Sir Richard Neaves, who was the director of the bank for 48 years, was also the chairman of the Society of West India Merchants: a group of vile men who stole Africans and made handsome profit by selling them on to farmers who needed them to work in their sugar and tobacco plantation in the West Indies.¹⁵

¹² C. E. Ukiri. "Very Important Historical Facts-Think Seriously About this"

¹³ C. E. Ukiri. "Very Important Historical Facts-Think Seriously About this"

¹⁴ C. Hall. Racial Capitalism, What's in a name? The Hobsbawm memorial lecture, 2022, 10th February, Birkbeck University of London, accessed on 10th September, 2022

¹⁵ M.D. Oshaa, "How Africans Were Lured into the First Slave Ship, Jesus of Lubeck" in www.africafacts.com accessed 18th November, 2022

Not many people, particularly fans know that initial founders of Liverpool Football were retired slave traders, whom in 1892, with slavery outlawed, decided to invest their money in a football club that will reap future rewards for their generations to come via a bank called Arthur Heywood and Sons & Co. That bank would be absorbed in turn by the Bank of Liverpool, Martin's Bank and Barclay's Bank.¹⁶

Liverpool was a major port for the transatlantic slave trade. Slave ships were often built or repaired in Liverpool. Nearly one and a half million Africans were forcibly transported across the Atlantic in Liverpool ships. The 'Liverpool Merchant' was the first recorded slave ship to sail from Liverpool. She set sail on 3 October 1699 and arrived in Barbados on 18 September 1700 with a cargo of 220 enslaved Africans. Part owner Sir Thomas Johnson is known as the 'founder of modern Liverpool' which wouldn't be what it is today without the trade in black Africans. The personal and civic wealth gained from slaving cemented the foundations for the Liverpool's future growth.¹⁷

The worry of this paper therefore is that despite the claims of the existence of generational curses, it does not appear to play out all the time. Descendants of very wicked ancestors are living very comfortable lives today despite the sins of their forefathers. The reality today is that the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren of Britons, Americans and Europeans, the perpetrators of monstrosity against the black man enjoy heaven here on earth, and live in more stable environment. Present Europeans' ancestors generally looted nations' natural resources, artifacts, bought fellow human beings as slaves with all imaginable inhuman treatment, instigated wars to service their interest – political and economic. Hitler led Germany between 1939 to 1945 to murder more than six million Jews in the Holocaust during World War II, yet Germany is the richest country in Europe today. USA is the richest country in the world today, yet slaves were chained from Africa to America and many were murdered and those that survived suffered and worked to death. The descendants of slave owners and mass murderers are living normal lives, rich with developed economies, politics, and infrastructure. To put it simpler, the challenge that existential experience of fortune and or misfortune does not seem to support the moral order claim and ancestral curses claim. We see the rich wicked getting richer and the honest poor getting poorer. Most very wicked people are very rich and are not

¹⁶ C. E. Ukiri. "Very Important Historical Facts-Think Seriously About this"

¹⁷ C. E. Ukiri. "Very Important Historical Facts-Think Seriously About this"

suffering, at least as much as the eyes can see. They have almost all that life has to offer; their children are in the best schools and positions and so on.

The objective of the paper hence is to appraise the belief in generational curse and try to explain it rationally from the perspective of the moral order: that is the moral version of the physical universal law of cause and effect - which holds that like all physical effects which are commensurate to the causes, moral actions or causes also provoke commensurate effects. Secondly to attempt to establish a link between what is regarded as generational curse, which manifests as repetition of repeated patterns, and epigenetics: the new scientific claim that deliberately chosen actions, habits and tendencies of parents produce a kind of genetic mutation on their DNA which are consequently passed onto their offspring.

A study like this is very relevant today since the belief in generational curse not only crosses many religious beliefs, but is today assuming an onto-existential dimension for many people, especially Africans, who now live in a world steeped in generational curses and thus interpret their everyday misfortune, suffering or challenges as a consequence of a curse. An author recounted the following very bad condition of the black man around the world in these words:

Having cursed his ancestors who gave him life, the black man is roaming around the world like a tortoise without a shell. He has no backbone. Zero identity. Thus no race respects him. He's lynched in Malaysia, incarcerated in Cambodia. He's shot like a dog in the streets of America. In Europe he cleans the white man's shit. And they spit on him. Why won't they? A man who hates himself and despises his roots deserves no respect whatsoever.¹⁸

It becomes important to look at the merits and demerits of such an existential position and attitude to life, to examine the possibility of transferring the negative consequences or punishment of ancestors' immoral actions to their descendants especially with an eye on history as, already alluded to above. The paper proceeds hence forth by examining the notion of generational curse in the light of moral order and tries to explain repetition of patterns, otherwise called generational curses as mere or possible epigenetic transfer.

¹⁸ C. E. Ukiri. "Very Important Historical Facts-Think Seriously About this"

Moral Order and Generational Curses

One perspective that seems to speak for the possibility of the existence of a reward or punishment system for moral actions is the moral order. The moral order is one of the two orders known to be operational in the world namely, the physical order and the moral order. Both of them are governed by the laws of nature: the *physical laws of nature* and the *moral laws of nature*.

Scientists long ago discovered that there are physical laws of nature governed and maintained by the law of cause and effect which is basis of all scientific discoveries and operations. Similarly, men of deep insight, men of intuition have also long discovered that there is a moral order also governed by the law of cause and effect. Scientific endeavors are premised on the belief that the physical universe is an ordered universe, governed by certain laws such that things don't happen anyhow in the universe; not any kind of cause can produce certain kinds of effect. Only certain kinds of causes can produce certain kinds of effects. Scientists have made ample use of this, and all scientific inventions or discoveries are based on the fact that the universe is a universe of order; of cause and effect.

On the existence of the moral order of nature, Joseph Omoregbe argues that just as the law of cause and effect operates in the physical order, so does it operate in the moral order which is an aspect of the natural, universal law of cause and effect, the law which ensures that certain kinds of causes produce certain kinds of effects. In his words:

This law which operates in the physical world also operates in the human world, for man is part of the universe. Moral law therefore is the operation of the universal law of causality in the human, moral order ensuring that only what is sown is reaped. It goes by different names; in Hinduism, it is known as the law of Karma, it is also known as the law of retribution or the natural law of justice or sometimes as nemesis. It ensures that when a person performs a morally evil action, he has sown evil and eventually he will reap evil in one form or another, sooner or later.¹⁹

The moral law which is known as Karma in Hinduism is identified as the relationship between a person's mental or physical action and the consequences following that action. It also signifies the chain of cause and

¹⁹ J. Omoregbe. *Ethics: A Systematic and Historical Study*: (Lagos: Joja Pub., 2002), 45.

effect in morality. In a paper “How Does Karma Affect Your Life”, Roger Gabriel writing on the moral order from the perspective of karma noted:

Karma means action. Physics shows that for every action, there must be an equal and opposite reaction. Karma is energy, which in itself is neither good nor bad; these are just the labels people choose to attach to it. The energy created by an action has to be returned. As ye sow so shall ye reap. It cannot be avoided.²⁰

Karma generally is the idea that what you do comes back to you. The energy you put out is the energy you receive back. Gabriel further explained that when you perform an action, it creates a memory, which in turn generates a desire, which leads you to perform another action which then determines how you live. Actions, memories and desires are the karmic software that run your life. Every moral action creates a subtle energy which is stored within the memories of the one who performed the action which activates desires – sometimes immediately, but more often sometime in the future.

Karma or the moral order shares semblance with the notion of generational curse as the two notions believe that consequences follow moral actions. Just as generational curses hold that what some ancestors did, particularly bad ones, in their life time have a way of affecting the life and fortunes of the descendants negatively, moral order holds that moral actions also provoke consequences. The only difference between the two is that while moral law of cause and effect affects the same person, the actor, in generational curse, the cause and effect operation moves from one person (a generation or generations) to another (the descendant). In both of them, the central issue is that all actions of wickedness, utter dishonesty, etc., whether caught by the civil law or not will have its consequences or punishment. But the problem with the concept of generational curse is how the consequences - fortune or misfortune - of an ancestor's actions get transferred to the descendants and that is the question that the concept of epigenetics may help us answer below.

Epigenetics and Generational Curses

Ordinarily, epigenetics is a biological term used to designate the study of changes in organisms caused by modification of gene expression rather than

²⁰ R. Gabriel. “How Does Karma Affect Your Life?” in www.goodreads.com accessed on 20th January, 2023

alteration of the genetic code. Epigenetic changes alter the physical structure of DNA by affecting which proteins are made that turn off or on in a particular gene expression. One example of an epigenetic change is DNA methylation – the addition of a methyl group or a “chemical cap” to part of the DNA molecule, which prevents certain genes from being expressed. Another example is histone modification.²¹ Epigenetics information sits above the genome, which controls the programming of DNA, instructing different cells how to express themselves.

Epigenetics makes it that behaviours and environment can cause changes that affect the way genes work. In an interview from the Conquer Series, a new men’s video-based teaching series, neuropsychologist, Jes Montgomery explains,

Sensations we put into the brain will use the DNA to change how the cell responds. And those genes are turned ‘off’ or ‘on’ based on what that response is. While the DNA doesn’t change, the expression does. What’s fascinating about this new study is that it reveals that our DNA is not immutable, which was the former notion, but that environment markedly affects our gene expressions and the ways we function and behave.²²

To buttress this point, studies in Intergenerational Trauma (trauma is a person’s emotional response to a tragic event like accidents, sexual abuse, natural disasters, heavy loss, etc.) have severally established that a trauma that is experienced by one person in a family – for example, a parent or grandparent – can be passed down to future generations because of the way that trauma epigenetically alters genes. In a paper, “How Does Intergenerational Trauma Work: Definitions, Studies and Examples” uploaded on September, 4, 2021, Kathi Valeji, defined Intergenerational trauma as:

the theory that trauma can be inherited because there are genetic changes in a person’s DNA. The changes from trauma do not damage the gene (genetic change). Instead, they alter how the gene functions (epigenetic change). A response to stress by a father

²¹D. McCartney, A. Stevenson, R. Hilary, et al. “Epigenetic Signatures of Starting and Stopping Smoking, in *EBioMedicine*,” 37: (2018), 214 -220

²²J. Montgomery, Kingship Historical Mystery Series, in www.jessmontgomeryauthor.com accessed on 1st February, 2023

through alcohol can alter the gene response to trauma which can be inherited by the offspring.²³

Valeji reported some 2008 researches which found an association between prenatal exposure to famine and an offspring's later adult disease risk. The offspring in the study had less DNA methylation (a biological process that controls how genes are expressed) of the imprinted IGF2 gene.²⁴

Valeji's report was also vindicated in an experiment on 'trans generational epigenetic inheritance' where researchers at Emory University, trained mice to fear a fruity odour by pairing it with a mild electric shock to the foot. Ten days later, the mice were allowed to mate. Incredibly, their pups feared the odour even without having encountered the smell before. But even more fascinating is that the offspring of those pups – the grandchildren – were born with the same specific memory. We see the mice study apply to humans. One example was the attacks of 9/11. Among the thousands of people directly exposed to the attack were 1,700 pregnant women. Some of these women developed symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Their children reacted with high levels of fear and stress around loud noises, unfamiliar people, or new foods. It seems the infants inherited the nightmare that their mothers experienced on that day of the 9/11 attack.²⁵

Another study in 2018 found that the male offspring of Civil war soldiers who spent time as prisoners of wars (POWs) were more likely to die early after age 45 than people whose fathers had not been POWs. The researchers concluded that paternal stress could affect future generations and that the impact may occur through epigenetic channels.²⁶ In other words, kids whose parents experienced trauma are more likely to grow up as parents who are unstable, emotionally distant, or anxious, all of which may also contribute to trauma that is passed down to another generation. According to Rockville M.D. in Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) series, No 57 "if trauma can be passed down epigenetically, it would make sense that it could have the

²³K. Valeji, How Does Intergenerational Trauma Work: Definitions, Studies and Examples, in www.goodreads.com uploaded on September, 4, 2021.

²⁴B. Heijmans, E. Tobi, A. Stein et al. "Persistent Epigenetic Differences Associated with Prenatal Exposure To Famine In Humans," *Proceedings Of The National Academy Of Sciences*, 2008; 105 (44):17046 -17046, doi:10.1073/pnas.0806560105)

²⁵Heijmans et al

²⁶D. Costa, N.Yetter,& H.Desomer. "Intergenerational transmission of Paternal trauma among US Civil War ex –POWs," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2018; 115, (44): 11215 -11220. doi:10.1073/pnas.1803630115.

potential to affect future generations.²⁷ Similarly a recent study, first of its kind, in Biological Psychiatry: Neuroscience and Neuroimaging shows that maternal childhood trauma can impact certain aspects of offspring brain development regardless of circumstances during pregnancy.²⁴ All these point to the existence of the phenomenon of epigenetics which account for replication of attitudes, effective copying, formation and structuring, propensities, *simili modu*.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of epigenetic transfer can be likened to the concept of memes developed by Richard Dawkins in his work, *The Selfish Gene* where he describes memes as units of cultural inheritance, a form of cultural equivalent of biological gene, a replicator (i.e. a piece of coded information that makes exact copies of itself, along with occasional inexact copies of mutations). Just as genes are able to replicate and pass on certain traits beneficial for survival such as immune system or eyesight, so does memes reproduce cultural habits, enduring ideas, attitudes and their consequences. A meme is the cultural counterpart to a biological gene. Dawkins defined memes as small cultural units of transmission, analogous to genes, which are spread from person to person by copying or imitation with the characteristics of longevity, fecundity and copy-fidelity. Memes overlap with psychological by-product theory and survive by virtue of their universal appeal to human psychology. Evolutionary psychologists agree that we, especially our brains, are psychologically primed for specialist data processing

The place of epigenetics in the discourse of generational curse or pattern is that epigenetics can be a window into how parents' habits and tendencies are passed onto children and grandchildren, since epigenetics shows that life experiences and choices do change us, including our brains, down to the DNA level, not in terms of changing the genetic code of the DNA but the expression. As DNA expression changes, they can be passed down the hereditary line in what is called epigenetic inheritance. Offspring can therefore, inherit parent's habits, tendencies, diets patterns, work environment – even one-off traumatic events – as a genetic legacy from their forebears. This may be why some patterns - strongholds such as anxiety, poverty, illnesses and addictions to name a few - seem to reoccur in a family history.²⁸

²⁷M.D. Rockville, Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) series, no. 57, Centre for Substance Abuse Treatment (US) Chapter three, Understanding the impact of Trauma.

²⁸ D. D. Dilks, et al. Maternal Childhood Adversity Associates with Frontoamygdala Connectivity in Neonates. Biological Psychiatry: Cognitive neuroscience and neuroimaging, doi:10.1016/j.bpsc.2020.11.003

Epigenetics reveals that not only do we pass along a DNA sequence to our children, but we also pass along the epigenetic instructions to them. In other words, information can be inherited and transmitted through generations. Mendel's law of inheritance explains this very well as it shows why an intelligent parent or generation is likely to beget an intelligent offspring or generation. The same holds true for dull parents and their children.

The argument here therefore is that epigenetics is the biological explanation for, besides normal genetic inheritance, why good and bad tendencies and of course their consequences remain along family line. Such negative tendencies as alcoholism, womanizing, divorce, impatience, lack of moderation, gluttony, poor existential judgement of issues, asocial life and so on. It is the consequences of the listed tendencies which are usually negative: poverty, backwardness, etc., that which reoccur along family line that is regarded as generational curse. Since epigenetics can transfer tendencies that produce consequences, good or bad which translate as fortune or misfortune, the so-called generational curse or pattern may be an expression of epigenetics inheritance. When patterns are repeated in a family line: the religious minded would call it ancestral curse, while the scientific minded man would call it epigenetic procedure.

Conclusion

This paper set out to appraise the possibility of the existence of the so called generational curses. The paper established that from the perspective of moral order, otherwise called karma a twin version of the physical order, which science deals with, the moral law of cause and effect does actually exist. Whether moral law of cause and effect operates seems reasonable but whether the effects are measurable in time and space, as in physical laws may be difficult to establish. The paper also considered epigenetics and meme theory as a possible scientific explanation of the so called ancestral or generational curses. Such negativities as addictions (i.e. drug/alcohol, sex), mental illnesses (depression, schizophrenia, bipolar depression), physical illnesses (hypertension, heart disease, cancer), and even poverty to name a few and their consequences could have been set in the trajectory by epigenetics. Business failure, marital ill luck, general life setbacks, stagnation, frustration or unfruitfulness; always struggling with 'something' are more generational epigenetics than generational curse. This then resolves the challenge of why the present generation of Europeans do not seem to be suffering the consequences of the heinous crimes of their ancestors. While the ancestors of

Europe, committed all those crimes, there has been a gradual modification of their epigenetic channels, resulting in gradual change of habits, passed down epigenetically to the present generation, which reflects as better discipline and the consequent progress. Further research is needed first to identify the historical moments when Europeans suffered calamities for the atrocities of their ancestors before the so-called modification took place and to resolve the possible category error between generational curse which is of the religious category and epigenetics of the science category.

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