

WORLD PEACE: THE IMPERATIVE OF CULTURE AS A LEARNED BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

All over the world, wherever there is a group of people or community, it is certain that one of the most important things such a group needs for survival is peace and stability. The present work is a treatise on the imperative of culture, which is a learned and shared behaviour, as a pointer to world peace. The paper posits that since human nature is the same all over the universe, then there are some ontological attributes to the nature of man and the society anywhere they are found. Peace is paramount here because it is necessary for the co-existence of different people and divergent worldviews. The work upholds that since man lives in culture and culture to a very large extent shapes human mind and spectrum of ideas, culture can then lead to world peace, in as much as it is geared towards the true nature of man as a society-dependent being. Culture is learned and shared, as a result, man can always embrace the virtues of any culture outside of his, as far as it is in agreement with the conditions necessary for the development and stability of the society where man lives. Hence, world peace is actually tenable as the paper argues through culture.

Keywords: Peace, Culture, Human, Society, Value and Nature

Introduction

The fulcrum of the present work is that world peace is achievable through culture. The argument is based on the fact that culture is a learned behaviour, often acquired through the process of enculturation. Man therefore can always identify the virtues and vices in a given culture and adopt the virtues in a culture he encounters, in so far as it is harmonious with human nature and the peace which the society requires for its stability and survival. "It is undeniable that we humans have a deep yearning for peace. And yet, we live in a world which is marked by discord, dissension, hatred, violence and war. Faced with this painful situation, can we really hope for peace? Is humanity capable of ushering in an era of peace on earth? ...what resources are available to it for establishing peace?" (Kunnumpuram, 2007: 9). With the help of cultural universals man can achieve peace in the society because there are some attributes which men have irrespective of where they come from and the need for peace remains one of them. With the promotion of a genuine culture of peace, man can always achieve peace.

It is obvious that: "Each society possesses a way of life or, in our terminology, a *culture*, that defines appropriate or required modes of thinking, acting, and feeling...The importance of culture lies in the fact that it provides the knowledge and the techniques that enable man to survive, both physically and socially, and to master and control, insofar as it is possible, the world around him" (Chinoy, 1967: 27). To this end: "The recognition of the good that is in every man, the understanding of everyman as

‘good that is’, and the need to be charitable, paves way for peace among mankind. Whenever man recognizes what is due of other men and gives this to them, justice is done” (Agbo in MIJAP, 2010: 197). We live in a pluralistic world. The diversity created by pluralism is something that has to be cherished and celebrated. Therefore the work aligns with the fact that: “Society should be open to all sorts of people, cultures, races, religions, values and ideas. Tolerance becomes a paramount virtue in a pluralistic society. This does not mean that there is total openness. Intolerance and dogma are not tolerated” (Fraser & Campolo, 1992: 68). Human culture ought to be peace-driven and the attainment of peace would basically enthrone stability, development and love in the society. The work ends with a conclusion.

1: 1: The Concept of Peace

There are conditions for all that concerns human life, just as there are natural conditions for the existence or development of every existence. The concept of peace is common to man as every human being is naturally desirous of peace for wellbeing and environmental tranquility. The *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* defines peace as: “a situation or a period of time in which there is no war or violence in a country or in an area” It goes further to define peace as: “the state of being calm or quiet”. From the above definition, it is obvious that peace is a natural and necessary condition for human existence and its absence generates war, conflict, tension, hatred, discord and antagonism. A situation of these likes would definitely not generate the unruffled or peaceful atmosphere necessary for a healthy human life, societal growth and stability. No human being can pretend that he or she does not need peace. In fact, even those who operate by violence ironically and wrongfully do so in order to suppress or annihilate others, to enable them take charge and eventually have peace. In fact, peace is therefore embedded in human nature irrespective of where he lives and anything which truncates peace is anti-human.

In so far as human existence is concerned, peace is needed across diverse socio-cultural settings. Scholars from ancient times to the present Age have developed different definitions of peace, especially in the face of violence, insecurity, war, terrorism, hatred and various forms of vices challenging man in the globe. (Chukwu in Chukwu, 2011: 87). Without peace, neither man nor the entire universe would be at rest. Man and the society must seek for those values that would generate sustainable peace and avoid those actions which would produce non-peace. To achieve this, the society must be conscious of the decision it takes and its impact on the peace and stability of human life. Hence: “We must examine with care what are the virtues of which we stand most in need” (Lawrence, 1982: 70). Obviously, among the virtues man needs to constantly review is the virtue of peace because without peace both the individual and the society would be vulnerable to being in pieces.

Lack of peace has rendered man a prisoner in a free world. Observes the French thinker: “Man is born free, and yet we see him everywhere in chains” (Rousseau, 1966: 5). Wars and conflicts all over the globe are indicative of the chains in which the modern man has subjected himself to. The anti-authentic human culture which pervades some circles in the present Age, with its attendant disorder, discrimination, hatred and incessant violence are representative of the self-inflicted incarceration of the modern man. Peace in its unadulterated form gives man a measure of fulfillment, happiness, tranquility and authentic hope.

In fact, man desires to live a worthy life in the society and: “The life that intends to be wholly obedient, wholly submissive, wholly listening, is astonishing in its completeness. Its joys are ravishing, its peace profound, its humility the deepest, its powers world shaking, its love enveloping, its simplicity that of a trusting child” (Nouwen, 1979: 73). The truth of the matter is that the authentic nature and mission of man can not prevail without peace and that is why human aspirations: “cannot thrive when society is in decay” (Rauschenbusch, 1964: 332). Peace is then quite vital in all human actions and for peace to reign: “It should be swiftest to awaken to every undeserved suffering, bravest to speak against every wrong, and strongest to rally the moral forces of the community against everything that threatens the better life among men” (p. 287). When man finds himself in a situation which is at variance with human nature, he is bound to appeal to his conscience in such a circumstance in order not to react in a non-peaceful, inhuman or anti-social manner.

The role of peace in both the individual and the society is fundamental to the mutual coexistence of different people of the world since all human: “beings created by God are ontologically good and deserving peace in the heart, respect, care and love” (Edeh, 2007: 6). That man is ontologically good means that not only he is intrinsically good by virtue of his being, he is also complementarily peaceful because without peace, his ontological goodness would not have the rightful opportunity to prevail. Peace in the world could be more meaningful when it touches all areas of human life. Effort should be made to extent the echo of global stability and oneness by means of: “bringing peace to the world through bringing peace to the individuals, the sick, the suffering, the abjectly poor and the miserable youths of the society....Peace is not just the absence of war, rather peace that lasts is the presence of the factors and forces that eliminate and even prevent conflicts, minimize tensions” (p. 6). The point here is that at best it is always wise to avoid those ugly conditions which would dehumanize man or destabilize the peaceful state of his nature. Since man is ontologically good, anything which distorts his nature should in all cases be avoided.

The modern man seems to have deviated from upholding the peaceful true nature of man, with the level of incessant conflicts and wars in different parts of the globe. However: “In all the history of mankind, there has been nothing in the least like this, and only a very profound faith in the indestructibility of the human spirit can give confidence that it will stand up to the much battering”

(Sheed, 1960: 197) Hence: “The common element in all of them is the necessity under which they operate of ignoring the elements by which men differ and concentrating upon the elements in which men are alike” (p. 197). The level of ethnic clash, terrorism, religious bigotry and willful orchestrated hardship by some political leaders in their various countries through corrupt practices are all suggestive of the loss of authentic human value and by extension the society. The anomaly stretches from one part of the pole to another. In fact: “Individual human beings, classes, nations, prey upon each other and all mankind insatiably goes on digging into the bowls of Nature. They can regard Nature only as something to be relentlessly exploited. Everyday life is imbued with a soulless spirit of production in which work is robbed of its creative meaning and man’s soul withers” (Hodin, 1956: 156). Man’s inhumanity to man is unfortunate and disheartening. Today, man knows no peace as a result of man-made callousness and self-seeking goals, thereby rendering peace elusive.

Those who perpetuate evil and disunity, thereby undermining the fulcrum of peace in the nature of man forget to realize that: “The harmony and functional unity in nature are expressed with circular symbolisms showing the descriptive and deontological view of the universe. The cosmic whole, the harmony in nature is equally a projection and an intentional reconstruction of how it ought to be” (Eboh in MIJAP, 2010: 135). Hence, to digress from the authentic being of every existence is to disrupt the nature of such being, including man who is ontologically good and peaceful. The purpose of every given existence is in its being and that is why it is imperative that the treatment given to every being must be in accord with its true sense. To achieve stability and social wellbeing in general: “This involves education, research, planning and judicious administration of the resources – both human and natural – of a given environment. This task of resource-management, beautification and humanization of nature in a given geographical location is the duty and right of the inhabitants and citizens of that area” (p. 139). To achieve peace in the society, there ought to be a human and environmental wellbeing. Man lives in the environment, therefore anything which affects his environment equally affects his life, either for good or bad.

1:2: The Idea of Culture as a Learned Behaviour

Man is born in the society, raised up in the society and the society shapes his life, just as he makes import to the values and ideals of the society, either directly or indirectly. In other words, culture is a learned behaviour and an essential feature of human life. If man is stripped of culture, he would no longer be a value-oriented and value-bearing being because it is through culture that the society sets values and worldview. Hence: “Human beings are cultural beings. It is the possession of culture that distinguishes humans from all other animal species. While animals may be said to live in societies and carry out social roles, they do not have culture as humans do. The social behavior of ants and bees is determined, by and large, by instinct” (Rosman & Rubel, 1998: 5). Culture is absolutely an essential characteristic of human society because not only that it has signs and symbols, it is as well

associated with values and virtue, since culture is expected to promote the ideals and philosophy of the people. Animals of lower species do not correctly in the real sense of the word possess culture and they lack intellect which is a necessary condition for the definition of values and appropriation of morality to actions and inactions.

One can not equate the group life of lower animal species with the value-laden cultural life of man in the society. For instance: “The differentiated social roles of queens, drones, and workers are completely biologically programmed, as is their system of communication. This is in sharp contrast to human cultural behavior, which is not biologically programmed, but rather learned and transmitted from one generation to the next” (p. 5). As one can easily notice, the communication pattern and social or group behavioral reality of the lower animal species are quite the same among the same specie irrespective of where it is found. From the human society on the other hand, it is certain that cultural behavior and all its semantic connotations, coupled with language, actually differ from one society to another, irrespective of the fact that all *Homosapiens* belong to the same single species. Other animal species lack these attributes and all that it takes to have them like reason.

Human life often follows a recognizable pattern with different colorations as a result of the cultural factor. This is why generally: “The fundamental events of birth, death, and marriage, the private details of bathing, eating, and love-making, the public occurrences of vote-getting and producing or selling of goods, and the myriad other activities in which men engage usually follow recognizable patterns. We often lose sight of the repetitive nature of most social action” (Chinoy, 1967: 23). Human beings can repeat their actions in different ways and even with different intentions, thereby giving room for different contextual meanings and interpretations, including the ascertainable patterns and generalizations necessary for social sciences. In lower animals everything is based on instinct and seemingly programmed behaviour; that is why the lower animals cannot contemplate culture. The social character of human life is no doubt shaped by culture. As a human factor, culture is intertwined with society because it is a fundamental element of human behaviour, since man is a social animal by nature in the Aristotle’s parlance.

In every society, man is affected by culture in all he does. The way he dresses, the kind of food he eats, how he eats them, whether with spoon or with ordinary hand, how he prepares them, manner of greeting, religious creed and most social practices are all elements of culture. Obviously, the analysis of any society cannot be accurately made without these indices. In this vein: “It should be noted, however, that the phenomena to which culture and society refer do not exist independently of one another. Although we can distinguish between them analytically, human society cannot exist without culture, and culture exists only within society” (p. 24). The regularities of behaviour we have in the society is as a result of the fact that men actually possess culture which sets standard for good

and bad, the right and wrong, virtue and vice. No man really lives or survives in isolation, therefore to live in the society where value and thought pattern reign, culture is automatically imperative.

2:1 Culture and Social Interaction: Peace Pointers

As it has been stated earlier in the paper, man is ontologically the same irrespective of location. On that note, men actually share certain features in common. To achieve genuine peace, man as a being endowed with reason must make reasonable effort and sacrifice to that effect. That man is endowed with a peaceful disposition does not mean that everything about him is automatically peaceful. He has to use reason to moderate his actions at all times in order to usher in peace. The human peace does not manifest on a platter of gold and by so doing, there is the need to learn, understand and relate with others in the course of social interaction, since everyone though ontologically same, still differs in individuality. Thus: "Culture, in order words, is transmitted not through the germ plasm but only through learning, and learning requires social interaction. The genes may have a lot to do with genius, but the chromosomes have nothing to do with culture....Culture, in short, is learned" (Bierstedt, 1974: 129). To be peaceful entails among others to understand and tolerate other cultures outside of one's own. One cannot be involved in social interaction with the prejudice that one's culture is the standard for measuring that of others. Such idea of cultural hegemony is absurd and cannot lead to the path of peace in the society.

Culture generates value system and when values are upheld by members of a society in the course of social interaction, mutual tolerance prevails just as peace consequently reigns in the society. Hence: "A *value* is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence. A *value* system is an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance" (Milton, 1973: 5). Without culture, value system as an organization of beliefs and preferable modes of conduct would not exist, peace would be a fantasy and consequently men would be compelled to operate in the Hobbesian 'state of nature' where lawlessness and bitter competition for survival reigns. Belief in culture affects the cognitive, affective and behavioral components of individual and group lives, which as a result makes import on the knowing, emotive and decisional disposition of the people.

Human action is always in consideration of how it affects other people. No man has absolute right to freedom, otherwise peace and stability would not be tenable. Culture shapes man and through human actions and value-oriented practices, man also shapes the society. Social interaction is a means of assimilation and transmission of cultural values and obviously, the dynamics of social interaction creates for tolerance and the extent at which social interaction is healthy determines the nature of

tolerance and peace it generates. Thus: “The concept of social relationship is based upon the fact that human behavior is oriented in innumerable ways to other persons. Not only do men live together and share common opinions, values, beliefs, and customs, they also continually interact, responding to one another and shaping their behavior in relation to the behavior and expectation of others” (Chinoy, 1967: 25). Human action is then anchored on reason and will which underscore his relationship with others, just as he is guided in his utterances and behavior by culture and philosophy of the society at large.

Unlike lower animal life, man on the other hand seeks for value in his relationship with others. He acts because something is responsible for his action and he interprets the circumstances around him, not in isolation. The culture of the society comes in consideration of the realities in the universe and that is why man makes value-judgment in his decisions. In fact, it is understandable then that: “‘Value’ is of course a relational word like ‘truth’ and ‘cause’, to which indeed, it is closely related. All these words refer to the interconnectedness of things in the universe and to the continuity of human experience which is itself a part of the universe...likewise coincident unity and continuity of our own life process” (Ayres, Clarence E. in Lepley 1949: 43). To this end: “Interaction, however, is not one-sided....A social relationship may be said to exist when individuals or groups possess reciprocal expectations concerning the other’s behavior so that they tend to act in relatively patterned ways. To phrase the point differently, a social relationship consists of a pattern of human interaction” (Chinoy, 1967: 25). Human interaction is an ethical relationship which is actually inexistent in the lower animal species. Human relationship in the society is juxtaposed on expectation because man has intellect and lives in a culture. Without the consideration of these pointers of human reality, peace would be elusive in social interaction and the society would suffer.

2: 2: Peace as a Condition for the Society

Peace is a necessary condition for human society and: “culture is, among other things, an amalgam of experience-based efforts to solve perceived problems as its human carriers adapt to their environment. It is through cultural lenses that we perceive problems and attempt to grapple with them” (Frederick, 1995: 83). Without peace then, man can neither exercise his culture nor can he relate with others harmoniously and he would even not enjoy the right to life not to talk of right to the acquisition of property. Basically: “Our whole life consists in getting along with other human beings. In our personal relations, therefore, the question is, how should human be treated: in the political order, the question is exactly the same. Now you cannot intelligently decide how anything should be treated until you are quite clear what the thing is” (Sheed, 1960: 2). As we have observed earlier, culture is a learned behaviour and any culture which is opposed to peace is not worthy of neither man as an individual nor the society, because peace is a *sine qua non* for the survival of man and society.

The truth of the matter is that: “Man, in order to lead a fulfilled life, has also to lead a harmonious life, and to realize the latter, he has to regulate himself; his body, soul and spirit. He prioritizes his actions and his wants and scales his preferences. In so doing, a component of some components (is) are deprived of their actions or wants for harmonious functionality of the whole man” (Agbo in MIJAP, 2010: 155). The implication is that man must maintain some human and societal conditions for his happiness and societal stability to be and peace is one of the central conditions for the sanity of the society. Generally: “Man aspires to live in peace but his interdependence or social nature does not always render this aspiration practicable....Some of the rights of man are violated by other men. In this situation trouble ensues, and peace is threatened...The breach of peace affects negatively the life and existence of man” (p. 156). However: “In order to live in peace and harmony, balancing the demands of the lowest and highest common factors with dictates of one’s peculiarity or individuality, some regulatory measures are needed. This regulation moves both vertical and a horizontal manner, from human beings and human beings to human beings and extra-human beings” (p. 192).

Some people argue that they can live their private life and it has nothing to do with what the society sanctions or what the culture prescribes. Some of the people who belong to this class are usually prone to disorganization. What they fail to understand is that even in our private lives we are shaped by culture. Our private life for instance does not permit us to go nude in the public, just as some cultures abhor sexual relationship with a minor, even with the minor’s consent. Our private life is not a limitless right because at every point in time it has a nexus with the public domain or common good, since man lives in the society. After all: “It’s this private part of life where we know ourselves best of all: this is where self esteem is forged, where basic decisions about motives, values, and commitments are made...I call it *the private world*, and I like to refer to its ideal state as one of order” (MacDonald, 1985: 7-8). If the private world of ideal state is one of order, it is then the one of peace and it would be improper to misconstrue it as justification for disorganization or apathy to the society.

2: 3: Human Culture and Global Peace

Culture, if developed properly can generate global peace since it is a human factor and specifically an offshoot of intellect and better said: “culture gives form and meaning to human values” (Frederick, 1995: 84). Consequently: “The biological nature of the human species requires that all cultures solve the basic problems of human existence. As a consequence of this, all cultures share certain fundamental similarities which are referred to as *cultural universals*...Though cultural differences exist, there are universal cultural similarities” (Rosman & Rubel, 1998: 6). The universal cultural similarities ought to be geared towards the peaceful co-existence of men in the globe since it is generally acceptable that no man can survive without the collaboration of others or the support of the society in general.

With a selfless desire and will for global peace, man can achieve it since: “The human actions are those performed consciously, intentionally, rationally, willingly and freely. They are influenced by the human reason with which one can perceive the intangibles and concepts for realization of the problems of ethics, the problems associated with the nature of and the end for man in society, the good to be encouraged and practiced” (Eneh, 2001: 1). Peace is a value and it is naturally desirable by man. Since human nature is more or less the same everywhere, there are then some factors which affect human life everywhere and peace is one of those necessary global needs for the societal good. For instance, world peace could be achieved in: “the society through special and effective charity which provides justice, honesty, education, morality, health, development, respect for the dignity of the human person irrespective of race, colour, creed, social status or physical conditions” (Edeh, 2007: 6). In this vein, the provision of those conditions which actually produce peace could be a way of taking a proactive measure against the occurrence of non peace.

The bottom line of human culture is the worldview which enables man to actualize the authentic potentials of his being. Such a culture must be an object of reason since man acts more with intellect than instinct. A human culture must be a product of rational nature and such a nature ought to develop the good in man while engendering a peaceful environment for his happiness and authentic growth. Thus: “the hallmark of his human nature is in those modes of conduct which depend on his reason. The specifically human conduct, which is thus implied by rational conduct accordingly signifies man’s natural law: man’s authentic mode of conduct which depends upon his self-determination and responsibility as rational being” (Messner, 1965: 13). To achieve global peace, man must pursue a global culture of peace which is obviously possible if the will is there, considering the fact that human action is a combination of will and reason. The human intellect is not a mere passive recipient of sensations without a critical assessment. Hence, global peace is tenable if man eschews selfish or group –centered interest at the expense of global common good.

Humans are different from lower animals in many different ways. Humans however do live in various symbolic and communication pools. As it could be seen, a gesture of friendliness or dignity among a particular group of people could be gestures of hostility and dishonor in another group and this is evidence of cultural difference. In any case, humans do not possess the difference in communication pool in their gene which means that men could go beyond cultural differences, learn the good in other cultures, embrace such good if it enhances global or human peace. In fact: “Humans can participate authentically and fully in more than one communication pool by learning the meanings and behavior of a second or third culture. People can even become bicultural to such a degree that they can help establish new patterns within different cultures” (Fraser & Campolo, 1992: 79). To this end: “Accordingly, the everyday life-world is a routine, orderly world enabling people to cope within their culture. It empowers them to relate to others on a common basis. Routines pattern human behavior, though the content of this standardization varies from culture to culture” (p. 87). Man lives an

integrated pattern of life because irrespective of one's cultural background, man is always bound to relate with people from other cultural perspectives. Hence, the culture which is pro-humanity is of ontological dimension since human life is the same everywhere; as a result, such a culture could be a powerful tool for world peace. After all, culture is a learned behaviour.

Conclusion

From the insight given by the work so far, it is obvious that culture is a man-made phenomenon and an essential ingredient of human life. Culture shapes human life and man also shapes culture through his actions and life style in the society. Man can achieve world peace through culture because culture is a learned and shared way of life. An authentic human culture must be in consonance with the authentic nature of man and since peace is a necessary condition for human co-existence in the society, a genuine culture ought to then promote and inculcate the values and virtue of peace at all times. This is achievable as the work implies, in so far as man has the will to work in this line of thought since: "Man by nature, is a social animal. He is born in a society of at least one man and one woman. He has common traits with his primogenitors and also with his immediate parents. He is therefore born in a community where some common factors and common interests are shared" (Agbo in MIJAP, 2010: 192). We also need to put into cognizance the fact that: "Most of the time, whatever the culture, humans live in an 'everyday life-world'. This is the world shared by people of a society. It operates according to several principles" (Fraser & Campolo: 86). One of the principles on which the society ought to naturally operate is the principle of sustainable peace and if man refuses to take this part, war, conflict, tension and avoidable man-orchestrated mischief would continue to prevail in the society.

Pluralism and heterogeneity are obvious features of modern life. Different kinds of people with different types of values have to learn to live together for the sustainable enthrone of peace in the globalized world. For the sake of global peace, the society ought to develop strong institutions which could guide against individual excesses without necessarily infringing on their human rights. Thus: "The individual is a bundle of powerful desires, willing and wanting. If there are no clear restraints on the individual, then society collapses into a heap of clamoring humans, each seeking to fulfill his or her own desires. The unrestrained individual, nurtured by the disorganization and normlessness of modern society, is an unhappy and troubled creature" (p. 148). Peace is vital for social development, stability, human growth, happiness and fulfillment. The earlier the world realizes that culture ought to be developed in harmony with the good of humanity for global peace, the better.

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