

Morality an Offshoot of Philosophy and Psychology: A Theoretical Exploration

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Abstract

The concept of morality and its roots may not be entirely new. Every day you hear people mention the word morality. Perhaps we all have our own opinions on what morality is. Several pieces of literature abound on morality (moral norms and the elasticity of moral actions) thus making it a little complex. Many are those who perceive morality to be the domain of religion and think that people who are avowed to one sect of religious belief or the other are those who should be concerned with morality. Far from these convictions, morality affects every human person and transcends all fabrics of human endeavors. We deal with people in our everyday life be it at work, church, in communities, and the like. Our relationships with others are sometimes adjudged as good, bad, and worse. By the same token, we also consider the behavior or lifestyle of others equally as bad, good, and worse. Why should it be so? The answer lies in what morality is. The exploration of the concept of morality led to the discovery that morality takes if not all a substantial quantum of its components from philosophy and psychology benefiting from their theories and concepts that act as guiding principles for moral behavior. In this paper, the authors aimed to explore the concept of morality and review how business managers and leaders can benefit from the application of morality to improve the success of their organizations. Generally, this theoretical exploration intends to illustrate the linkage between philosophy, psychology, and morality and to help us understand how they can shape our moralistic conduct and some consequential rewards we can get as individuals, communities, business organizations, or nations by putting them into practice. Specifically, this theoretical exploration relies on existing literature and attempts to expose readers to some insights that connect philosophy and psychology to morality by exploring the nexus between philosophy, psychology, and morality. It also examines how philosophy and psychology shape morality. It further explores moral psychology and its elements. Additionally, it considers

moral norms, standards, or values by focusing on some key elements: fairness, altruism, trust, and cooperation and discusses how “reciprocity” a social mechanism can help promote compliance with these moral norms, standards, or values. Finally, the review on how business managers and leaders can benefit from the application of morality to improve the success of their organizations which has also been discussed.

Keywords

Philosophy, Psychology, Morality, Moral Diversity and Universality, Moral Psychology, Moral Philosophy

1. The Nexus between Philosophy and Morality

Long and Sedley (1987) noted that the etymology of Morality is from the Latin word “moralitas” which variously means “manner, character, and proper behavior” and is conceptualized as the distinction of intentions, decisions, and actions between those that are considered as proper (right) and those that are improper (wrong). Stanford University (2011) defined morality as “a body of standards or principles derived from a code of conduct from a particular philosophy, religion, or culture, or that which is derived from a standard that a person believes should be universal”. Stanford University’s definition lends credence to my introductory comments that morality somehow is an offshoot of philosophy. Scholars have noted that key philosophical concepts like normative ethics, an area concerned with concrete systems of moral decision-making such as deontology and consequentialism gave birth to and served as philosophical underpinnings of the morality of which the Golden Rule “One should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself is a key example (Flew, 1979; Stace, 1937). As Deigh in Audi (1995) noted, closely associated with morality is “ethics otherwise known as moral philosophy”, an aspect of philosophy that addresses questions of morality and is sometimes interchangeably used with morality. Blackburn (2008) and Byars and Stanberry (2019) summed it all up by underscoring that the concept of philosophy comes with what is called normative and descriptive ethical theories. Our focus here is on normative ethical theories and not descriptive ethical theories. Normative ethical theories focus on how we should behave and assess whether our actions and decisions are morally based on reason. But just to grasp the impression of descriptive ethical theory in terms of morality, Gert & Gert (2016) said that it views “morality” as “personal or cultural values, codes of conduct, or social customs from a society that provides these codes of conduct in which it applies and is accepted by an individual”. To them, descriptive ethical theory in terms of morality does not mean objective claims of right or wrong, but only refers to that which is considered right or wrong which is directly opposite to “normativism” which categorically connotes that “whatever (if anything) is right or wrong, may be independent of the values or mores

held by any particular peoples or cultures”. Normative Moral Ethics is the branch of philosophy that studies morality in this sense if not absolutely but closely linked with Kant’s (deontology): categorical imperative (universal obligations irrespective of who you are) (Blackburn, 2008; Byars & Stanberry, 2019).

2. General Features of the Philosophy by Kant

Kant’s “critical philosophy” is based on human autonomy and contends that human appreciativeness is the basis of the general laws of nature that structure all human experiences and that human reasoning offers the world the moral law, which is the basis for people’s belief in God, freedom, and immortality (Kant, 2018) and this translates into an important feature of Kant’s philosophy known as Deontology (Cholbi, 2015; Misselbrook, 2013) divided into two dimensions: hypothetical and categorical imperative (Misselbrook, 2013) which emphasize that all people or human beings can think and understand common moral laws that they can apply in all situations of human endeavor. Another characteristic of Kant’s Philosophy (ethical theory) is the universal maxim also known as the categorical imperative and the importance of goodwill. This explains that it is a non-consequentialist ethical theory that explains the motive behind an action, not the outcome, and also determines whether a particular action is good or bad (Cholbi, 2015; Misselbrook, 2013). Kant’s Philosophy is characterized also by the law of universalism. It states that people ought to act in a way such that the maxim, or principle, of their actions, can be willed a universal law and that if an action cannot be universally willed, then such action is morally off-limit. In essence, before one engages in an action, the question of whether that action can be considered as a universal law should be answered. If the actions fail that test, then the motive for such action is defeated “ab initio” or from the beginning. Characteristically, Kant’s philosophy also emphasizes respect and dignity for humanity. Kant’s philosophy explains that people need to treat humanity (self and others) as ends and not as means. By this, Kant considered the fact that fundamentally, humanity needs to treat all persons with respect and dignity. They must assist others in achieving their goals when possible and desist from exploiting people as objects or implements to further their parochial ambitions. In this regard, Kant’s philosophy demonstrates that because humans have the capability for independence and level-headedness or reasonableness, it is fundamental that all humans are treated with maximum respect and dignity. Kant’s philosophy again demonstrates an attribute of “the kingdom of ends,” which moves all human beings from an individual level to the social level of thinking and behavior. The deontological philosophy of Kant maintains the principle that people ought to act on principles that could be generally accepted within a community of other rational agents. Thus, if an action is considered unacceptable within a community, no matter one’s interest in that action, it cannot be taken because the morality of an action has been fundamentally defeated by its non-communal acceptability. To simplify Kant’s ethical/moral philosophy, it

concentrates on impartiality or fairness and the value of the individual and anchors on people's capacity to reason, their independence or level-headedness (i.e. people's capacity to give themselves ethical or moral laws to govern their own lives) with rational consistency. Kant's ethical/moral philosophy also proposes a very impartial sense of ethical behavior/morality which is absolute duties (duties that are binding on all humans irrespective of their individual and collective ambitions, desires, goals, or outcomes (Wilburn, 2020).

3. How Philosophy Shapes Morality and Ethics

In the conviction of Blackburn (2008) and Byars and Stanberry (2019), these normative philosophical theories include Bentham & Mill's (utilitarianism), Kant's (deontology), and Aristotle's (virtue theory) which focused respectively on Ends, Means, and Character regarding whatever actions or decisions we take. Utilitarianism otherwise known as consequentialism which is associated with Bentham and Mills helped us to consider the consequences of our actions, that is the ends, and proposed that a moral action is one whose consequence (ends) accomplishes the greatest good for the greatest number of people. In their opinion, although utilitarianism does not account for how our actions at least help us to think about who is helped and who is harmed by it. Kant himself first introduced his 'categorical imperatives' as part of his deontological ethical theory developed in 1785 in his work *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* as a way of assessing the incentives for actions where he stated "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (Kant, 1993 [1785]) and also advocated for his famous philosophical principle of "categorical imperative" as an unconditional universal moral obligation imposed on human beings and defined it as "commands or moral laws all persons must follow, regardless of their desires or extenuating circumstances and was convinced that as morals, these imperatives are binding on everyone". They stated that an important aspect of Kant's categorical imperatives is the universalizability principle, which states one should "act only by that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law" (Muscente, 2020). Fundamentally, this simply means that if you take an action, everyone else should also be able to take the same action. Examples of categorical imperative statements or concepts are "You shouldn't kill," "You ought to help those in need," or "Don't steal." Humanity, in general, abhor these behaviors and set them as immoral. So philosophy has played a great role in making individuals and society as a whole become ethical in thinking and acting.

Blackburn (2008) and Byars and Stanberry (2019) helped us to know that Deontology, a theory advanced by Immanuel Kant, is another aspect of philosophy that helps us be moral. To them, Kant's Kantianism (Deontology) examines the means, or actions, we use to carry out decisions and suggests that "it is the means that lend nobility to the ends" and maintains that each of us owes certain responsibilities to others and that certain universal rules apply to every

situation and bind us to these duties and that the ethical or moral permissibility of our actions depends on the extent to which we comply with these universal rules of responsibility to others. Thus Deontology taught us that the mode or method or means through which, we make our decisions remains the primary determinant of moral conduct. For example, if you have to take someone's life to achieve an end, you may be morally wrong because how you achieve that was morally impermissible. Blackburn (2008) & Byars and Stanberry (2019) again led us to uncover Socrates' virtue theory which is also one of the normative moral theories under a philosophy that teaches us morality by inculcating virtues of courage, self-control, justice, and wisdom in us. It also taught us to always conduct an ethical analysis of the decisions we want to make and ensure that they are closely linked with the person we choose to be.

4. Moral Psychology

Morality, philosophy, and psychology are branches of the same tree. Morality riveted into the latter two in that we have moral philosophy and moral psychology. We, therefore, need to look critically at moral philosophy and moral psychology to aid our better understanding here. Although morality itself can be traceable to biology and genetic attributions (Shermer 2004; Bekoff & Pierce 2009; O'Connell, 1995; Wilkinson, 1984; de Waal, 1997; Boehm, 1982), the focus of this paper is to consider the "moral psychological aspects of morality". "Moral psychology" is a field of study that incorporates both philosophy and psychology noting that traditionally, the term "moral psychology" connotes the study of moral development (Haidt & Kesebir, 2010; Lapsley, 1996) and later widened to include themes that connect the philosophy of mind, ethics, and psychology (Ellemers et al., 2019; Doris & Stich, 2008; Wallace, 2007) with the main components of moral psychology being "moral judgment, moral reasoning, moral sensitivity, moral responsibility, moral motivation, moral identity, moral action, moral development, moral diversity, moral character (especially as related to virtue ethics), altruism, psychological egoism, moral luck, moral forecasting, moral emotion, affective forecasting, and moral disagreement" (Teper, Inzlicht, & Page-Gould, 2011; Doris & Stich, 2008). It is imperative to state that moral psychology has grown from its initial biological consideration (Sevinc et al., 2014; Doris & Stich, 2008; Moll et al., 2005) to cover other areas like cognitive/computational (Kleiman-Weiner et al., 2017; Crockett, 2013; Cushman, 2013) as well as cultural dimensions of moral judgment and behavior and artificial intelligence (Awad et al., 2018; Bonnefon, Shariff, & Rahwan, 2016).

5. Elements of Moral Psychology

As earlier mentioned, one key element of psychology is **moral psychology**, which consists of key components namely "moral judgment, moral reasoning, moral sensitivity, moral responsibility, moral motivation, moral identity, moral action, moral development, moral diversity, moral character (especially as re-

lated to virtue ethics) which comprise altruism, psychological egoism, moral luck, moral forecasting, moral emotion, affective forecasting, and moral disagreement” (Teper, Inzlicht, & Page-Gould, 2011; Doris & Stephen, 2008) and moral norms, standards, or values (FeldmanHall, Son, & Heffner, 2018b). A brief explanation of these elements will suffice in helping to deepen our understanding of how psychology has helped in building both our individual and collective moralities.

5.1. Moral Judgment

The first, moral judgment according to Myyry (2022) “refers to a decision about what one should do in a morally problematic situation, what is right and what is wrong when deciding what to do”. Oftentimes when people conclude that an action is right or wrong, that a person is good or bad, or that a situation is just or unjust, they are making moral judgments. Writing extensively on moral judgment, McLeod (2013) noted that Kohlberg (1958) in his Ph.D. Dissertation. The Dissertation explained that the individual’s moral judgment is developed through three main stages of moral reasoning—pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional morality each of which is subdivided into two making the whole process of acquiring moral judgment status go through six distinct stages. The first stage of developing moral judgment starts in childhood. Known as the pre-conventional stage, the child is exposed to Obedience and Punishment Orientation where he/she must be good to avoid being punished and if punished then that child has done something wrong. The child is equally exposed to Individualism and Exchange where they recognize that there is not just one right view that is handed down by the authorities. Different individuals have different viewpoints. The second stage of developing moral judgment is called the conventional stage. This stage is normally associated with the reception of societal rules about good and bad and right and wrong. People especially adolescents and adults start to internalize the moral standards of valued adult role models. The conventional moral judgment development also goes with the internalization of authority but does not question it and the social system that upholds the responsibilities of relationships and social order is considered to be the best. Specifically, at this stage, people learn to maintain good interpersonal relationships and social order are seen to be more aware of the broader rules of society, and are more inclined to obey the rules to uphold the law and avoid guilt. Post conventional stage is the final stage in moral or morality judgment development and comes with individuals’ understanding of universal moral principles. Though abstract and ill-defined, this stage comes with the individual’s quest for the preservation of life at all costs and the importance of human dignity. It is a stage where individual judgment is based on self-chosen principles, and moral reasoning is based on individual rights and justice and is the highest on the moral judgment development ladder any individual can strive to achieve. This third and final stage comes with social contracts and individual rights where people

become aware that while rules or laws (universal principles) are indispensable ingredients for the good of the greatest number, they may sometimes work against the interest of particular individuals or groups, so people are compelled to create their own set of ethical or moral rules which may or may not fit the law such as human rights, justice, and equality from their individualistic perspectives devoid of legal and moral considerations (Kohlberg, 1958 cited in McLeod, 2013).

5.2. Moral Reasoning

Moral reasoning is a mental process that occurs both within and between individuals and serves as a precursor to moral judgment. It is how people think about what is right and wrong and how they acquire and apply moral rules. Moral reasoning is a characteristic of moral psychology that overlaps with moral philosophy and forms the basis of descriptive ethics (Raine & Yang, 2006). Moral reasoning is also associated with Kohlberg's stages of moral development in that an individual's ability to think and decipher right from wrong, good from bad, and just from unjust are all acquired through thorough cognitive stages of pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional morality (Kohlberg, 1958). Thus moral reasoning is when you engage your mind about what is right from wrong, good from bad, and just from unjust but moral judgment is when you categorically decide that this action is right, good, or just and the others wrong, bad, and unjust.

5.3. Moral Sensitivity

Moral sensitivity is also referred to as moral awareness or ethical sensitivity/sensibility) is conventionally defined as the ability to recognize moral issues when they arise in practice deals with one's capacity to recognize prevailing moral problems and understand the consequences of the decisions made regarding moral issues. We make decisions every minute, hour, and daily, etc. targeted at individuals or groups. The extent to which we feel the effects or the consequences of the decisions or the choices we make on those who may be affected by such actions reflects how morally sensitive we are. (Lutzen, Evertzon, & Nordin, 1997; Tanner & Christen, 2013; Rest 1986; Sparks & Hunt, 1998; Ersoy & Göz, 2001). In other words, moral sensitivity embodies the responsiveness of a person to the needs of others together with forestalling whether or not a course of action can hurt or interrupt internalized moral principles or codes of conduct of values of others or vice versa (Tanner & Christen, 2013). So we can say that moral sensitivity is the ability of a person to realize that there is a moral issue or dilemma to be solved and that there is a need for a decision to be taken to address the problem but will have to weigh the decision to know if it will be in the interest of others or will hurt them. The more we become morally sensitive, the more we will make decisions that will bring greater good to the greater people.

5.4. Moral Responsibility

Philosophy, psychology, and morality all demand we always take ethical actions and decisions and should be accountable as such. **Moral responsibility**, the fourth, therefore, explains human action, decisions, intentions, and consequences (Fisher, 1999, Eshleman, 2016). Philosophically, psychologically, and in morality a person or a group of people is morally responsible when their voluntary actions are unblemished. However, in real life, for people's actions to be deemed fit all the time is not plausible hence moral responsibility places its lenses on the morally significant outcomes that would make it appropriate to blame or praise people (Eshleman, 2016; Fisher, 1999). Therefore, Klein (2005) and Eshleman (2009) noted that moral responsibility is the level of morality where an action either by an individual or a group of people deserves praise, reward, blame, or retribution by ethical requirements. They also explained that moral responsibility comes in two forms-individual moral responsibility (personal praise, reward, blame, or retribution by ethical requirements), and collective/group moral responsibility where a group action is ethically subjected to praise, reward, blame, or retribution by communal ethical requirements. Collective moral responsibility relates to moral standards relevant and appropriate for addressing widespread actions of groups relative to the good, praise, or harm and wrongdoing associated with them. Central to moral responsibility is a morally responsible agent someone who is appropriately subject to the demands, expectations, and evaluations of morality. Moral agents are those whose actions and decisions when mirrored against moral responsibility score high marks of praise and rewards as against blame, condemnation, or retribution (Meyer, 1998).

5.5. Moral Motivation

The fifth psychological component of morality is **moral motivation**. Even before outlining what the experts say about moral motivation, I'm tempted to believe that it is that burning urge or desire in every person to do things ethically in consonance with universal ethical obligations. This may in the end be right or wrong and this is the beauty of the concept of morality, moral reasoning, and moral judgment. Whether the individual's desire or inner quest to do things that are personally and or collectively adjudged as ethical means are pointers to moral motivation. In as far as this paper is concerned, our exploration of some scholarly dimensions of the concept will underscore and settle our personal and individual worries as well as fine-tune our resolve to better understand "moral motivation". According to Kant's (2008) deontological approach to morality, moral motivation is that moral demand emanating within the individual that focuses on universal duties rather than individual ends/goals/consequences. Kant noted that three universal laws/duties/obligations underpin moral motivation (the desire to act ethically) which he referred to as "Categorical Imperatives". A categorical imperative according to Kant is a moral command (universal

law/obligation/duty that people must follow regardless of how they feel about it, notwithstanding the ramifications that might follow its compliance, or who may or may not have told them to comply. Kant came up with three schools of thought on the categorical imperative (CI), the Universal Law Formulation, the Humanity or End in Itself Formulation, and the Kingdom of Ends Formulation and postulated three assumptions one each of his moral motivations. First, People ought to act in a way such that the maxim, or principle, of their act, can be willed a universal law. Second, People ought to treat humanity (self and others) as an end in itself and never as a means to an end. Third, People should act on principles that could be accepted within a community of other rational agents.

What Does Kant Mean by These Underlying Assumptions of Moral Motivation?

Kant's (1775) first proposition explains the fact that our moral motivation (encouragement) to act should conform to universal laws and principles in that if an act cannot be approved of by the majority as ethical then such action is morally unacceptable and off-limit. Let us consider a situation where one decides to strip naked and walk on the street. The maxim here will be that it is morally right for everybody to strip naked all the time and walk on the street? The obvious answer is a big no and that maxim is a self-defeating one so it cannot be a universal will and people cannot be morally motivated to do that. The same applies to stealing where the action right from inception had failed the universal acceptability test of which there should be no moral motivation for engaging in it. Kant's second stand was that everybody has the capacity for autonomy and rationality and should be treated with the same respect and dignity. By this, he meant we should always be morally motivated to help others when need be to achieve their goals and also shun exploiting or using them as mere tools or objects to further our goals. The bottom line here is that we need not exploit others for our gains but rather help them achieve their goals.

The third formula, "People should act on principles that could be accepted within a community of other rational agents" which stems from Kant's idea of "the kingdom of ends," moves us from the individual level to the social level and explains that people should act and be acted upon within the larger society by the dictates of moral law. According to Kant, the moral kingdom of ends is synonymous with "a systematic union of rational beings through common objective laws". So in such a rational community, there must be a recognition of each other as equals whose interrelations must be guided and firmly controlled by collective laws, and shared ends agreed upon mutually by all. Kant's take on moral motivation which he dealt with in his categorical imperative focuses extensively on fairness and the value of the individual by maintaining the individual's ability to reason with self-sufficiency which means individuals can give themselves moral laws and govern their own lives with logical consistency. Kant's position also reflects an impartial sense of ethics by entrenching that all human beings have universal obligations in the form of unconditional duties that are binding

on everyone regardless of their needs, objectives, or outcomes.

6. Moral Identity

The sixth psychological component of morality is **Moral identity**. Aquino & Reed II (2002) and Aquino, Freeman, Reed, Lim, and Felps (2009) defined moral identity from a cognitive perspective as “the extent to which being a person with moral traits is a social identity that is salient to one’s self-concept”. Aquino K. and Reed II (2002) and Cui, Mao, Shen, and Ma (2021) noted that moral identity comes in two forms: internalization and symbolization with the former reflecting the degree to which moral self-representation is experienced as being central to one’s self-definition and the latter also connoting the level to which the social uniqueness of a moral person is communicated through one’s real-world behaviors. How important morality is to a person demonstrates that person’s moral identity and reflects in some trait-like individual moral activities which differentiate the person from others (Hardy & Carlo, 2011a: pp. 212-218; Hardy & Carlo, 2011b: pp. 495-513). To put it simply, our moral identities are the reflections of our ethical behaviors that distinguish us from all others. Moral identity, therefore, is not our sheer knowledge of issues of morality but how we replicate these moral dimensions in our lives toward others.

In the realm of philosophy, “Moral action” arises from several moral theories or taught (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-theory/>) Philosophers propound these moral theories basically to provide the basis for virtuous or right actions and standards or principles for judging actions. Although there is some ambiguity in these moral theories providing exactly what is the right action, they explain unfairness, acceptability, and impermissibility of actions which granted or permit some actions or range of actions to be morally right. We can consider the following moral theories and their contributions to “moral actions”. In Bentham, Singer, and Mill’s Consequentialism, moral action is considered “the action that produces good amongst the options open to the agent at the time of action” (Bentham, 1961; Mill, 1998; Singer, 1986). The most well-known version of this theory is Classical Utilitarianism, which holds that the right action promotes pleasure (Mill). In Kantian’s Deontology, a morally worthy action is by the Categorical Imperative, which requires an agent to refrain from acting in a way that fails to respect the rational nature of other persons (Kant, 1785 [2012]; Gregor & Timmerman, 2012). Also, Rossian’s Deontology maintains that the right action is the action that best accords with the fulfillment and/or non-violation of one’s prima facie duties (Phillips, 2019). Scanlon’s Contractualism said “An action is morally wrong if it is an act that would be forbidden by principles that rational persons could not reasonably reject” That is to say that a moral action is an action that will be permissible by all rational beings (Scanlon, 1998, 2008). Hursthouse Virtue Ethics noted that the right action is the action that a virtuous person would characteristically perform in the circumstances (Hursthouse, 1999). Moral actions form the basis of moral or ethical norms that rule almost every

day human behaviors and serve as a binding agent for social concord. Moral actions give us universal principles, standards, guidelines, and values that should be binding on all of us (FeldmanHall, Son, & Heffner, 2018b). Community and prosocial relations the world over are known to have taken their roots from a collection of multifaceted developed moral norms and actions (Goldstein, Cialdini, & Griskevicius, 2008, Nichols, 2004, Cialdini, 2003) which promotes rational development and cross-cultural diffusion of moral actions and form the basis for overall social functioning (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1997).

FeldmanHall, Son, and Heffner (2018b) argued that four moral norms: fairness, altruism, trust, and cooperation apply to an extensive range of moral behavior/action. They noted that these fundamental building blocks of moral actions are firmly rooted in one general philosophy; mutuality which helps society to make malleable moral decisions transversely over an array of social contexts.

7. Moral Development

Moral development explains what happens within the life cycle of a person from infancy through adulthood in acquiring moral or ethical reasoning, habits, and judgment which results in the acquisition of the culture, beliefs, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors that contribute to a person's moral reasoning, understanding, and judgment. Moral development comes in three distinct stages known as the pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional morality stages of moral development each of which is sub-divided into two dimensions as alluded to in the discussion on moral judgment (McLeod, 2013; Kohlberg & Hersh, 1997; Kohlberg, 1958) and confirmed by Koblin (2022). Dorrough (2011) also maintained that moral development involves the process of people over time forming an open-minded sense of what is right and wrong, proper and improper, just and unjust, and good or bad by moving from basic and predetermined definitions of right and wrong to a sophisticated means of differentiating right from wrong. So it is important to note that moral development is a lifelong process and not an event and that each day in one's life an aspect of morality is developed.

8. Moral Diversity and Universality

Some dictionaries define moral diversity as the disparity of moral inclinations or inconsistency of moral quality. According to Ten Have & Patrão Neves (2021), moral diversity can be described as an observed reality in egalitarian societies where everyone is at liberty to have their moral norms and actions, values, and principles. Haidt, Rosenberg, and Hom (2003) also noted that moral diversity refers to a situation where a considerable proportion of members of either a group or society shift from the most valued moral goods of a community. By moral goods, the authors mean social, personal, or spiritual obligations such as trust, fairness, altruism, justice, social harmony, self-actualization, piety, and chastity inter alia which are the basic moral structures for justifying or criticizing

the conduct, behaviors, and actions and practices of others within a democratic society which compliance should be universally binding on all people. Another way the authors considered moral diversity is the existence within a group or society of many diverse thoughts of right and wrong accounting for no general agreement about which moral goods should be pursued.

Research has shown that moral diversity arises from multiple sets of factors or dimensions including biological considerations (stages of moral development that are closely associated with psychology and neuroscience) (Moll et al., 2003, Cowell & Decety, 2015, Decety & Cowell, 2016), sociocultural factors (Decety & Wheatley, 2015, Hamlin, 2014), and personal and social interactions (Tomasello & Vaish, 2013). It is therefore important to realize that since human nature develops in different sociocultural settings and under different biological developmental stages so do their views, opinions, and perceptions of every fabric of morality and so long as these diversities continue to be naturally part of the human race, moral diversity will be with us till the end of the world. But that is not to say that there are no universal morals that are upheld across the world. Moral universality refers to the state where some fundamental moral components and ethical laws are acceptable to most societies (Razis, 1990). Universal morality explains that within the human race as far as human existence is concerned, there are some moral norms and values that apply to all individuals (Kemerling, 2011) regardless of their “culture, race, sex, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other distinguishing feature” (Gowans, 2008). Morality started in the Garden of Eden and the concept of moral universality perhaps began with the Jews (Judaism) with the “Ten Commandments (for the Israelites) and “the seven laws of Noah” which were considered categorical imperatives (moral principles) for his sons. These “God-given” laws and principles include inter alia proscriptions against idol worshiping, cursing God, murder, adultery, bestiality, sexual immorality, theft, abstinence from eating the flesh of some animals, prohibition of bearing false witness against neighbors and the duty to institute courts of justice were all meant to create a form of universal moral values among Christendom and these values had been kept till this present days and will hopefully be considered as sacred moral values for Christianity infinitely (Noahide Laws, 2008; Vana, 2013; Spitzer, 2018; Greenstone, 1906; Berlin & Zevin, 1992 [1969]; Feldman, 2017). We can also talk about international conventions, charters, and laws that are binding on all member states as akin to modern society’s entrenchment of moral universality. Examples of these include the United Nations “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” which is a “universal” approach to articulating international human rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948) and the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights which also enjoins all member states to take steps to ensure the compliance of basic human rights of all people. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) (1996-2022) documented the principal international human rights instruments with a clarion call on member states to apply them fully to protect the rights of all people

(<https://www.humanrightscommission.ky/human-rights-treaties>). These international conventions and treaties notwithstanding, we all know how diverse the world is religiously with different denominations like Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Africanism, Traditionalism, and Islamism. Even with Christian and Islamic religions, several idiosyncrasies imply that those who ascribe to God have diverse ways of observing morality when it comes to their beliefs. Cultures are also very diverse globally and what is moral here becomes immoral there. Nationalism is no different. What may be morally permissible in one country is equivocally considered morally impermissible in another national jurisdiction. In essence, while it is universally obliged that people behave morally, various and complex stages of individual and collective stages of development, our sociocultural and religious differences, economic and political inclinations and nationalistic approach to morality mean that moral diversity will always be more profound than its universality.

9. Moral Character

An individual's moral character according to [Cohen and Morse \(2014\)](#) can be intellectualized as that person's nature towards morality, that is how the individual thinks, feels, and behaves either ethically or unethically or the orientation of the individual to morality. This suggests that there are and can be individuals' good and bad moral characters. Good moral character or better still ethical personality explains the personification of the state of people's dogmata and standards which are considered to be most valuable to society as a whole ([Baumeister, 2018](#)). From this, we can suggest that a bad moral character is the moral dispositions of a person that are adjudged to be worse appreciated or acceptable by fellow individuals and society as a whole.

10. Moral Norms. Standards or Values

Moral norms, standards, and values are subsets of social norms. ([Schein & Gray, 2015](#)) in that universal and common to social life and sets the stage for communal and generally shared psychological attitudes, expectations, and beliefs about how society, in general, should conduct itself and also encourage harmonious coexistence by ensuring concerns of others are considered in all actions ([Ullmann-Margalit, 1978](#)). Moral and social norms endorse and proscribe social behavioral "mores": customs, traditions, and values regarding permissible and impermissible conduct in different social situations and non-compliance attracts social sanctions so they can be generally considered valuable mechanisms in molding individual and communal everyday social behaviors ([Turiel, 1983](#)). It is important, however, to note that although the essence of moral norms is to encourage the well-being of people and society in general, in some instances moral norms act in disagreement with deep-seated human ambitions toward survival. For example, in the "biological urges" for human survival ([Darwin, 1859; Dawkins, 1989](#)) which brings to the fore, the individual resolve to increase wealth,

power, and prestige as part of the survival journey, it is possible that could elicit some immoral conducts culminating into departure from ethically normative patterns and resulting in undesirable or harmful effects such as corruption to amass wealth, suppression of others for power and prestige, and sometimes linguistic oppression or dominion of others to the detriment of others and the larger society. Society's quest to avoid such unwarranted exploitations of people for personal egoism brought in its bandwagon social and moral norms such as norms of fairness, altruism, trust, cooperation, respect, justice, harm, and so forth all of which are sub-served by, and firmly engrained in a solitary moral doctrine (reciprocity), a concept that allows individuals and society in general to fashion malleable moral pronouncements across an array of social contexts which should be universally binding (FeldmanHall et al., 2018b). Oriel FeldmanHall et al. extensively deliberated how "reciprocity" a single social instrument promotes and reinforces compliance to these norms. I discuss this in the next section.

11. Promoting Compliance of Moral Norms through Reciprocity

We know from Melnikoff & Bailey (2018) that reciprocity supports moral norms and norms serve as a lubricant behind flexible moral conduct, action, or behavior. Oriel FeldmanHall et al. (2018b) also underscored reciprocity as a social mechanism for moral norms and explained with the help of works of other scholars how it promotes the observance of and administration of moral norms and noted that reciprocity has two propositions: as singular opinions about the structure of the world, or as a culturally required standard of behavior. Individually, reciprocity is understood within the context "just world" (Lerner, 1980), where will willingly reciprocate social exchanges considered to match fair balance over time (Gouldner, 1960). From the cultural perspective, reciprocity connotes moral "ought" where in this sense reciprocity functions by replying to negative actions with negative treatments, or positive actions with positive treatments (Eisenberger, Lynch, Aselage, & Rohdieck, 2004; Gouldner, 1960; Tsui & Wang, 2002). These two understandings of reciprocity as an enforcement tool for moral norms, therefore, point to a belief in "universal justice" where those who destruct and violate the tenets of reciprocity ultimately will endure the ramifications for disturbing the reciprocal equilibrium and as Fehr & Fischbacher (2004) and Gintis (2000) put it one practical example of "universal justice" is "negative reciprocity" where those who do not comply with moral norms are subjected to retribution. Some scholars have argued that it will be fairly appropriate to consider and rebrand the concept of reciprocity as a tool that inspires compliance to a package or a collection of moral norms rather than seeing it as a norm in and of itself (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Leimgruber, 2018) and such broad conceptualization and application of reciprocity can both flexibly and strongly regulate and enforce diverse behaviors as those who help others

will be rewarded and those who harm others will be sanctioned (Dufwenberg & Kirchsteiger, 2004; Gintis, Henrich, Bowles, Boyd, & Fehr, 2008; Gouldner, 1960; Nowak, 2006; Rabin, 1993; Rand & Nowak, 2013). Oriel FeldmanHall et al. (2018a) identified three elements: contextual factors, emotional experiences, and learning as those that influence the extent to which reciprocity backs flexible moral action. It is therefore important to reflect on these factors about key moral norms: fairness, altruism, trust, and cooperation which the “game-theoretic approach” will assist us here. The game-theoretic approach to decision-making is a branch of applied mathematics propounded by Von Neumann & Morgenstern (1945) which provides tools for analyzing situations in which parties, called players, make interdependent decisions and the interdependence stimulates each player to consider the other player’s possible decisions, or strategies, in formulating his or her strategy, decisions, and actions. Traditionally, game theory was associated with two-person zero-sum games in which gains or losses are offset by those of other participants but today the approach is extensively applied in a wide range of behavioral relations for rational decision-making in many spheres of human activity (Myerson, 1991). The choice of the game theoretic approach to examining the roles contextual factors, emotional experiences, and learning play in influencing the degree to which reciprocity supports flexible moral actions stems from two fundamental reasons as pointed out by Oriel FeldmanHall et al. (2018b). First, behavioral economic games permit the observance of how people interpret, deduce, and act on what others do (Von Neumann & Morgenstern, 1945), and with each game or behavioral episode having its own peculiar set of regulations, investigators can easily regulate and influence the configuration and perspective of any game and since individual’s choices are delicately responsive to the complexities and the circumstantial “minutia” of the setting of the game it will be easy for investigators or researchers to detect how dissimilar norms and prospects can change social and moral conduct through the alteration of the “games” set of rules (Camerer, 2003). Second, the literature supports the fact that it is possible to express with some degree of precision, the outcomes of strategic exchanges and conducts arising from economic games mathematically on a universal scale. So, armed with perceived mathematical accuracy from the concept of “game theory” we can simply predict with some breadth of exactitude the magnitude of punishment to be meted out to an offender in violation of fairness or amount of money a person may be prepared to unselfishly (altruistically) give to another person and or how the degree to which individuals care to trust or collaborate with an unacquainted partner (Von Neumann & Morgenstern 1945, Myerson, 1991, Camerer, 2003, FeldmanHall et al., 2018a). I am therefore convinced that using these perspectives of economic games (the game theoretic approach) to examine the role reciprocity and its driving forces-contextual factors, emotional experiences, and learning play in supporting flexible moral actions offer if not all some strong suppositions for appreciating moral norms and their influence on behavior. I will in the ensuing session deal

with some of the key moral norms—fairness, altruism, trust, cooperation, respect, justice, and harm and how we can promote their compliance in some details.

12. Fairness

Fairness is one of the six pillars of moral action, conduct, or behavior. “Fairness is concerned with actions, processes, and consequences that are morally right, honorable, and equitable. In essence, the virtue of fairness establishes moral standards for decisions that affect others. Fair decisions are made in an appropriate manner based on appropriate criteria” (JOSEPHSON INSTITUTE OF ETHICS. <http://www.josephsoninstitute.org/>). To make a morally fair judgment, scholars argued that reciprocity (both negative and positive) determines how morally fair an individual’s action or decision would be in that the presumptions of or the golden rules of reciprocity are that treat others as you would like others to treat you (positive or directive form), do *not* treat others in ways that you would *not* like to be treated (negative or prohibitive form), and What you wish upon others, you wish upon yourself (empathetic or responsive form) (Flew, 1979). These rules explain why reciprocity is a social payback norm that explains how an individual feels indebted to reciprocate what another person had done to him/her in the same manner (American Psychological Association). So, reciprocity induces people to pay back negatively or positively depending on the balance of what they have received. In another sense, we can say that reciprocity motivates people to do to others what those people have done to them. In my imagination, that is fairness, if not what else can be? Moral fairness exists in all spheres of human endeavors—religion (Spooner, 1914), businesses and economic exchanges (Fehr & Gächter, 2000), and social exchanges or interactions including sociology, philosophy, psychology, and even economics (Deauseault, 2018). It is my belief therefore that to apply moral fairness in the negative or prohibitive form, positive or directive form, or empathetic or responsive form depends on “reciprocity”—the social payback norm. Consider a situation where you are either treated badly or compassionately, the instinct of reciprocity will appeal to your cognitive ability to retaliate in the same manner you were treated. Hardly will you do otherwise. Again, considering you witnessed Mr. A or family B murder your father or mother, or these same people saved them from being murdered by another person, what will be your payback approach? For those who killed their parents naturally, fewer will let go of such a horrifying experience but will go the extra mile to reciprocate the good done to his/her parents by saving their lives. This is how reciprocity influences our moral fairness or otherwise, in many situations we face.

13. Altruism

Altruism connotes *any action or behavior of a person that increases the other person’s well-being, happiness or welfare which does not generate, result, or provide any direct reward to the person who executes them* (Penner et al., 2005;

Dovidio et al., 2006; Batson et al., 2011). Seeming somewhat odd and an exception to the rules of Darwin's evolutionary assumptions, contemporary research suggests behaviors are natural, spontaneous, and even involuntary (Zaki & Mitchell, 2013). Some scholars also maintained that altruism is where an individual's effort to help others comes at a cost to that person rather than the recipients of the gesture (Aknin et al., 2015; Sterck et al., 2015). Altruistic actions include situations when we assist stranded strangers, donate blood to the sick, give out to charity or the needy, or prevent a crime from being perpetuated. Even though, evolutionary psychologists believe that as a fundamental characteristic of human nature naturally people are supposed to be more altruistic to others than themselves which supports the evolutionary sense that "the survival of the individual is less important than the survival of the individual's genes" (McAndrew, 2002). Some scholars revealed that research has discovered that people are helpful to their relations (kin) (Madsen et al., 2007; Stewart-Williams, 2007) as more people will be willing to be more altruistic (for example donate kidneys to their kin (families and close associates) than to strangers (Borgida, Conner, & Mantefel, 1992). Despite the theoretical and logical underpinnings that support kinship altruism, people still help those they are not related to. The question is why should it be so? As Trives (1971) noted this happens because of the principle of reciprocal altruism which he explained to mean the "*idea that if we help other people now, they will return the favor should we need their help in the future*". Reciprocal altruism extends beyond kinship to include helping others irrespective of our affiliations to them with the belief that they will return the same in case we are also in need. Reciprocal altruism is not only the preserve of humanity but extends to animals as well. For example, birds can be seen sounding alarms to other birds to warn them of the presence of predators, male monkeys are noted for intimidating enemies and protecting the back of their troop as it retreats, and bats are on record for having a buddy system which allows a bat that has had a successful night feeding to vomit some of its food for other less privileged companions to feed on, and dolphins normally support other sick or hurt animals by swimming beneath them and pushing them to the surface so they can breathe and survive (Wilkinson, 1984). So, our moral actions of helping someone today are not just for the sake of help but because we know someday somehow, that action will be reciprocated in the same manner we offered it not necessarily by the same person, but by any other person related or unrelated to us and because rationally we always want to be treated good, reciprocity makes us treat others good as well in anticipation of similar future positive return.

14. Trust

From the 1750s to the 2010s, there have been countless definitions or conceptualizations of the term "trust" (Walterbusch, Gräuler, & Teuteberg, 2014). While some are straightforward forward others are very complicated. For the sake of

this discussion, I will put across some scholarly definitions of and some types of “trust”. The import of this session is not to extensively deal with trust as a general term but to focus on an aspect of it moralistic trust and how reciprocal exchanges promote or inhibit moralistic trust. For example, [Moorman et al. \(1992\)](#) defined trust “as a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence”. [Sabel \(1993\)](#) said trust is “the confidence that no party to an exchange will exploit the other’s vulnerability”. Perhaps the definitions that are so close to the intended focus of trust as a moral virtue or element stemming from reciprocal actions were offered by [Hosmer \(1995\)](#) which says trust is “the expectation by one person, group, or firm of ethically justifiable behavior is, morally correct decisions and actions based upon ethical principles of analysis—on the part of the other person, group, or firm in a joint endeavor or economic exchange” and [Whitener et al. \(1998\)](#) that “first, trust in another party reflects an expectation or belief that the other party will act benevolently. Second, one cannot control or force the other party to fulfill this expectation is, trust involves a willingness to be vulnerable and risk that the other party may not fulfill that expectation. Third, trust involves some level of dependency on the other party so that the outcomes of one individual are influenced by the actions of another” The last two definitions explained that trust involves one person depending on another and being convinced that the person will act morally but also mindful that in the unlikely event that the other party fails he faces the risk or the vulnerability of the immoral actions of the other. This brings to mind the concept of “moralistic trust” which goes beyond the general understanding of the term trust in its everyday application. [Fukayama \(1995: p. 153\)](#) maintained that moralistic trust is a “commandment to treat people as if they were trustworthy” with the assurance that they ascribe to your basic ethical principles and is based on the goodwill of based upon perceived goodwill of the other people ([Seligman, 1997: p. 43](#); [Mansbridge, 1999](#); [Yamigishi & Yamigishi, 1994: p. 131](#)). Kant’s Golden rule (the categorical Imperative) is the basis of moralistic trust and demands that people should have faith in one another. The golden rule, therefore, does not demand that do unto others as they do unto you but you do unto others as you would want them to do unto you ([Uslaner, n.d., <http://gvptsites.umd.edu/uslaner/uslanereps.pdf>](#)). Moralistic trust and reciprocity are closely linked in that you can only do to others what you think they can also do to you. In other words, if you expect something good from someone, you will equally be good to that person and vice versa. So, reciprocal anticipation builds not only trust for its sake but moralistic trust where you pay back in the same manner in which you receive. Unless you trust someone your morality (goodness) towards that person will be quavering. The extent to which one can be fair, altruistic, cooperative, respectful, just, and harmless to the other all depends on the degree of trust one has in the person. If individuals, communities, society, and nations can be morally judicious to each other that will depend greatly on the reciprocal trust that exists between them.

15. Reciprocity and Moral Cooperation

Co-operation generally denotes a practice of working together for a reciprocal benefit and not for selfish or individual parochial interests to which humans and animal species usually ascribe (Lindenfors, 2017; Kohn, 1992). As Oesterheld (2017) and Tomasik (2015) noted, “**Moral cooperation** is the process where groups with different moral views act together to attain mutual benefits”. Empirical evidence suggests people do not cooperate just for the sake of it but for “reciprocity”. Thus, individuals, societies, and nations join forces for their mutual benefit because of a pay-back or tit-for-tat pattern (reciprocal) nature of behavior (Fehr & Fischbacher, 2004; Fehr & Gächter, 2000a, 2000b; Hamilton & Axelrod, 1981). Curry (2016) explained that the theory of “morality-as-cooperation” contends that morality comprises an assemblage of biological and cultural solutions relative to the problems of cooperation recurring in human social life. Oliver Scott & co further noted that morality-as-cooperation is rooted in the theory of non-zero-sum games which categorize diverse problems of cooperation and their resolutions, and mentioned helping kin, helping your group, reciprocating, being brave, deferring to superiors, dividing disputed resources, and respecting prior possession as explicit practices of cooperative behavior in all cultures after testing the moral valence of these cooperative behavior indicators in the ethnographic records of 60 societies and were convinced that as many of these cooperative morals are applied in the majority of the cultures with equal weight across all regions of the world which made them conclude that these moral indicators are acceptable contenders for universal moral rules. Empirical evidence by Trives (1971); Nowak (2006); Nowak and Highfield (2012); and Rand and Nowak (2013) suggest that cooperation in general and moral cooperation specifically arise when there is reciprocity (trade-offs). For example, Jordan et al. (2014) cited Nowak (2006); and Rand and Nowak (2013) and maintained that there is a different collaboration mechanism that enhances the long-run payment of cooperative principles and encourages cooperation and that is reciprocity. It is important to mention that direct (Axelrod, 1984; Fudenberg & Maskin, 1986) and indirect (Nowak & Sigmund, 2005) reciprocities are two major determining factors of moral cooperation or social interaction. Under direct moral cooperation, individuals under the belief of the “shadow of the future” assist others on condition that they will pay back and that anticipation of future reward for today’s action keeps becomes the persuasive force on people’s emotions to cooperate (Axelrod, 1984; Fudenberg & Maskin, 1986). Indirect reciprocity, explains that people’s quest to cooperate with others is dependent on the previous actions of those people toward others (Nowak & Sigmund, 2005). So, under indirect reciprocity, you can only achieve a good status and expert from others when you cooperate with others in the past. Thus, it explains and supports the notion one good turn deserves another. In essence, the belief of being rewarded tomorrow for what has been done today (others reciprocating the gesture) irrespective of who benefited from that action (be it kin or not) becomes

the driving force (motivation) for all human supportive associations, interactions, and efforts on the moral scale.

16. Relationship between Moralistic Trust and Reciprocity

Fukayama (1995) considered “moralistic trust” as a moral commandment or obligation to treat people as if they were honest. Fukayama explained that the fundamental clue behind moralistic trust is the belief that most people share in others fundamental moral values (cf. Fukayama, 1995: p. 153). Moralistic trust is premised on “some sort of belief in the goodwill of the others” (Seligman, 1997: p. 43; cf. Mansbridge, 1999; Yamigishi & Yamigishi, 1994: p. 131). Uslaner (2002) maintained that “moralistic trust” is the trust that binds people arising from the faith people have in others they do not know which does not come from their life experiences. Uslaner (2002) noted that while it is natural to develop trust in people you only know, moralistic trust connects people to others they don’t know. Hardin (1992) was of the view that moralistic trust is not an association between two or specific people in a special circumstance but something that makes people believe in others as being truthful or honest although they don’t know them. Hardin further maintained that moralistic trust details behavior association especially how people ought to trust each other by emphasizing the “Golden Rule” (which is the basis of moralistic trust). This golden rule does not call for people to do unto others as they will do unto them but demands people do unto others as they would have expected them to do unto them. Reciprocity is a social norm of returning good for good and bad for bad (Fehr & Gächter, 2000) and an expectancy that people will give back to others in the same or similar manner in which they received which explains the eye-for-an-eye rule (Gouldner, 1960; Gergen, Greenberg, & Willis, 1980; Blau, 1964; Axelrod, 2006). Isoni and Sugden (2019) explained using Rabin (1993) that reciprocity is about “kindness” or “unkindness” contingent on the implications of one action to the other and assumes an incentive to reward or punish depending on the kindness or unkindness of their actions. According to the authors, reciprocity comes in two forms: “reciprocal kindness” (a psychologically plausible motivation) and “reciprocal cooperation” (the motivation to play one’s part in mutually beneficial practice). Isoni and Sugden (2019) explained that Moral trust is not the same as reciprocity in that the latter is about give and take while the former is a cognitive imagination that one will be honest enough to do something and hence place a reliable premium on that person. They further alluded that reciprocity is to be kind to the kind and unkind to the unkind which is reciprocal kindness and ironically cannot explain trust, trustworthiness, or moralistic trust. It was their conviction that trust, trustworthiness, or moralistic trust can and should be considered or understood as “reciprocal cooperation” and cooperative moves towards shared benefit but not for paying one in equal terms. This explains that to trust someone means to expect that the person will behave in a manner socially acceptable but does not imply that one will reward the person based on that trust.

In reciprocity, one is responding to a real-world action by another person such that the response exemplifies directly the action (return good-for-good) and (pay bad actions in the same bad manner).

17. How Does the Sociocultural Setting Influence Morality?

According to [Gert and Gert \(2016\)](#), sociocultural dimensions of morality fall under descriptive ethical theory that views “morality” as “personal or cultural values, codes of conduct, or social customs from a society that provides these codes of conduct and in which it applies and is accepted by an individual”. They argued that descriptive ethical or moral theory does not imply objective claims of right or wrong, but only refers to that which is considered right or wrong depending on acceptable sociocultural norms, beliefs, and values. [Gonzalez and Birnbaum-Weitzman \(2020\)](#) explained sociocultural settings as a widespread assortment of societal and cultural influences that influence the thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and ultimately outcomes of people within a society and identified elements such as race, ethnicity, ethnic identity, sex, acculturation, language, beliefs and value systems, attitudes, and religion as key sociocultural contexts that can affect people behavior. [Han, Glover, & Jeong \(2014\)](#) after extensive research in Korea concluded that socio-cultural factors expressively impact the morality of people especially their moral judgment and moral development. “Geeksforgeeks” explained that morality connotes a set of values, beliefs, and principles that guide an individual’s behavior and decisions and is closely related to a particular society or culture. It also refers to the difference between right and wrong contingent upon an individual’s beliefs and values. “Geeksforgeeks” admitted that the sociocultural norms, culture, religion, values, beliefs, and principles of a society have a direct impact on the morality of people living or associated with that sociocultural context. It explained that, in a society, it is what that society values and accept as a norm that will become the barometer for measuring morality, and hence such accepted sociocultural norms, values and belief to a greater extent are the definers of what morality should be within such environment (<https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/what-is-morality/>).

[Gyekye \(2010\)](#) admitted that across the world and more especially in Africa, morality is generally conceived as a set of social rules, principles, and norms that define and enshrine as a social construct the beliefs about right and wrong conduct as well as good or bad character and regulate the conduct of people in a society with which some may be universal and apply to all human societies since they align to fundamental human and societal needs, interests, and purposes, individual sociocultural settings of societies play a significant role in the definition and determination of their specific moral conducts (morality). The allusions of [Gyekye \(2010\)](#) are pointers to the fact that although there are universal moralities as espoused by Aristotle, societies have redefined such universal moralities to suit their contexts. For example, in Africa when someone makes the statement “to possess a virtue is better than gold”, or “When virtue founds a town, the

town thrives and abides”, that person believes that statement is a moral statement or a moral principle that go beyond his community and nation but also to all human societies. But contemporarily, what constitutes a virtue in one social context may differ significantly in another societal setting. Again, our ways of worship/religion, how we respond to issues, and by extension how we approach situations are not the same due to the diversity of our sociocultural norms, beliefs, and values. In this regard, a European or Asian may not behave the same as an African. Even with the African continent, the East, Central, South, or West Africans have morality shaped by their sociocultural diversities. Thus, it is imperative to state that Africans for example believed that “personhood” is synonymous with morality, and this status is acquired via one’s interaction with his or her sociocultural environment or context as exemplified in the following statement made by Ifeanyi Menkiti, an African philosopher from Nigeria:

The various societies found in traditional Africa routinely accept the fact that personhood is the sort of thing that has to be attained and is attained in direct proportion as one participates in communal life through the discharge of the various obligations defined by one’s stations. It is the carrying out of these obligations that transforms one from the it-status of early childhood, marked by an absence of moral function, into the person-status of later years, marked by a widened maturity of ethical sense—an ethical maturity without which personhood is conceived as eluding one. (Menkiti, 1984: p. 176)

While this statement affirms the notion of the “African moral personhood”, the African morality that is established on humanism, a principle that reflects human interests and welfare as rudimentary to the thoughts and actions of the African people and demands the maintenance of the basic welfare and interests of each member of society which accomplishment cannot be detached from outside the communitarian society, this may not be the case in other parts of the world. As Gyekye (2010) puts it an individual’s social or community life is not an optional choice in that social life which is one key foundation of morality depends upon natural sociality, engulfing all individuals in a grid of moral obligations, commitments, and duties that are socially and culturally required to be fulfilled in the pursuit of the common good or the general wellbeing. While Africans consider morality (common good for all, and moral ideals such as love, virtue, character, personhood, and compassion) as fundamental duties, and also frown upon the development of bigoted racial discrimination and insolences and consider it as a bulwark toward people from different places who are undeniably part of the universal human family called race, such to a large extent is regarded as supererogatory in Western ethics probably due to sociocultural diversities. These are testimonies that sociocultural context, factors, considerations, and dimensions arguably determine the morality and moral conduct of people in different parts of the world.

18. How Does Moral Leadership Influence Modern Business?

Ethics otherwise considered as Morals generally concerns the types of values and

morals people or communities and societies consider necessary or apt and deals with the righteousness and motives of people, communities, and society as whole individuals and their motives (Brown et al., 2005; Northouse, 2016); Oladimeji et al., 2022). Moral or Ethical leadership is that which emphasizes respect for moral principles and values and the self-esteem and human rights of others. Moral or Ethical Leadership therefore encompasses ideas such as faith, trustworthiness, consideration, charisma, and equity (Brown et al., 2005; Oladimeji et al., 2022). Villirilli (2021) noted that the tenets of moral leadership demand that businesses conduct their affairs by a set of values and principles that are considered by the generality of the people as a sound foundation for the common good. Villirilli (2021) also underscored that due to moral leadership, six major components including honesty, justice, respect, integrity, responsibility, and transparency had now become barometers for measuring the effectiveness of business operations. Businesses are no longer just employing anyone as a leader but are critically evaluating the moral characteristics of prospective leaders whether they know their internal compass and values, have consistent ethical behavior, and ensure that people do not depart from the generally accepted ethical codes or standards. Contemporary businesses in responding to the demands of moral leadership demands and charge business leaders to always put across their concerns even amid unpopularity, assume full responsibility always, always show up and speak for and be there for their teams, act with impartiality, and serve as role models (they walk their talk). Villirilli (2021) explained that the influence of moral or ethical leadership also extends across the intensification of the sense of belongingness within the organization and the promotion of positive work environments that propel and enhance the moralistic or ethical conduct of employees. Businesses are now compelled to improve customer relations by involving them in major business decisions and programs to make both internal and external stakeholders feel as part of the organization for them to assist in implementing decisions and programs more easily. Villirilli (2021) further indicated that closely associated with improvement in customer relations, moral leadership demands from businesses to ensure they command high-level respect from society and communities, place a premium on customer values and interest, and ensure that people are always resolved to become part of and work with the firms.

19. Some Benefits of Ethical or Moral Leadership to Business Organizations

How will business managers and leaders benefit from the application of morality to improve the success of their organizations? There is no denying the fact that in the 21st century, application of morality has assumed significant preference in business organizations because organizations have more than ever before now come under intense pressure from their internal and external stakeholders to act in manners that promote the collective good and benefit (Eryaman, 2008; Child, 2015) and organizations are been forced to align their processes to infuse busi-

ness morality (organizational ethics) with their corporate mission, vision, strategies, and goals to build and enhance internal and external relationships (Brimmer, 2007: p. 3). An organization that is bed rocked on morality is always conscious and responsive to its internal or external stakeholders and this ensures management and employees (internal stakeholders) and owners and other interested parties of the organization (external stakeholders) share a mutual vision and mission and work towards common goals, objectives, and aims (Kish-Gephart, Harrison, & Treviño, 2010). Research suggests that in an organization where there is “ethical or moral” leadership, there is always a premium on “task significance” resulting in high productivity and overall organizational performance and profitability (Ashton & Morton, 2005; Piccolo, Greenbaum, Den Hartog, & Folger, 2010). The existence and application of morality in organizations increases the transparency of their corporate philosophies and culture, communication practices, principles, and values, improves management-employee engagement, and promotes innovation, increases performance and profitability, enhances customer satisfaction leading to institutional success (Effron, 2017; Mougalian, 2016; Ashton & Morton, 2005). Business organizations are not islands. They operate in a socio-economic and political context. The application of moral values in an organization is crucial to obtaining “goodwill” from external stakeholders. As Scherer & Palazzo (2011) put it undertaking social accountabilities, corporate social responsibilities, and supporting the ideals, and interests of the larger community and society, as a whole ensure reciprocity from them and entrench the goodwill of organizations. Villirilli (2021) concluded that businesses whose leadership adheres to high moral standards do not only stand tall among their compatriots but also get material and financial support in times of crises, enjoy high employee loyalty and commitment, and better morale, higher competitiveness and stability on the market, and higher stakeholder, customer, and employee motivation. Madhoshi & Kia Kojouri (2018) noted that contemporary organizations are challenged with a myriad of issues including a lack of trust among employees, minute inventiveness and knowledge-sharing, inappropriate classification, administrative and governance structures, lack of a proper business model, inadequate financial and material incentives and resources to promote originality, lack of keenness for creativity, insufficient technical skills of employees, low level of technology adoption, and inadequate state or governmental support but Brown et al. (2005) were convinced these challenges can be surmounted through moral or ethical leadership which comes in the form of the display of normatively suitable conduct through personal action and interpersonal relationships, and the advancement of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making.

20. Conclusion

This review is an effort to explore philosophy, psychology, and morality. Attempts were made to investigate the nexus between philosophy, psychology, and morality and how philosophy and psychology shape our morality either as indi-

viduals or as a society. It considered some philosophical and psychological theories, elements, and underpinnings of morality. It also considered some key moral norms, standards, values, and reciprocity as a social mechanism that drives moral conduct the relationship between moralistic trust and reciprocity, and how sociocultural settings influence morality. Finally, the review highlighted the influence of morality on business operations and some benefits of ethical or moral leadership to business organizations.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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