in a country like Nigeria, where tertiary institutions are springing up at a very fast rate, there is an urgent need for a book which spells out the ethics of the academic profession. CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN PROFESSIONAL ETHICS is a compendium which poses and answers questions about the ethics of different disciplines of academic study and of teaching in the tertiary instutions.

The book contains fourteen chapters written by academicians who are either experts in ethics or are committed to the issues of ethics in the academic profession. It fills a yawning gap in Literature on academic study in Nigeria in particular and in Africa as a whole.

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GRADUKE

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

EDITED BY

ADUKE ADEBAYO

CONTENTS

CHAPTER FOUR

ETHICAL ISSUES IN RELIGION: THE ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

It is a truism that religion still permeates human lives and that it is very much alive and relevant to topical political, social and economic issues in the world. Its relevance today can be seen most importantly, in the yearning for a satisfaction greater than what today's sensate society offers to many people because of the realisation that they are not happy or at peace despite their material achievements and comfort. Because of its pervasiveness, religion is always present in every moment of the individual's life, right from birth till death, in waking and sleeping moments and in religious and secular spaces. Despite the tendency by some to conclude that religion has failed in unifying humanity, Idowu, however asserts that it is not religion as such that has failed but a distorted form of it (Idowu,1966 & 1976).

It is equally true that it is this distorted form of religion that is often paraded by many Nigerians. This explains why though many Nigerians are very religious they are not ethical in all their dealings, contrary to what is expected of them. It is very apparent that the religiosity of many Nigerians, whether Muslims or Christians in particular is only superficial because very many Nigerians would not hesitate to engage in unethical conduct once they believe they can get away with it. This paper considers the apparent religiosity of many Nigerians in the light of the Islamic concept of *ethics* and the human nature in relation to its ethical disposition. It is the contention of this study that the teachings of Islam are directed at re-orientating humans from the natural state of animalism to the natural state of godliness and ethical conduct. The study shows that most of the ethical problems confronting humanity, including Nigerians, today arose from the persistence of most people to remain in their natural state of animalism. It also shows how education at all levels can be employed to achieve the natural state of perfection and morality. We assert that it is the absence of ethical considerations in the curriculum development and teaching of most contemporary institutions of learning at all levels which explains many of the man made problems besetting our society today.

ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR AND THE TEACHINGS OF ISLAM

Islam as a religion can be described as a form of contract that ties and binds all believers to their Creator, Allah (Q9:11). This relationship is based on a primordial testimony of humans that Allah is indeed their Lord (Q7:172). Consequently, humans are born with this testimony impressed in their consciousness. By breathing His breath into humans, Allah has placed a natural longing for the Transcendental in them; hence humans breathe, live and die religion. It is in Islamic parlance their *fitrah* (Q30:30). But contrary to the assertion of some scholars of religion, it is not only humans in Islam that are *homoreligious* by nature but the entire creatures of the universe. The birds, the insects and all animals also breathe, smell, chant and sing religion (Q17:44 and 24:41). According to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih al-Muslim*, every child is born in to the state of *fitrah* except that the parents make of him a Jew, a Christian or a Zoroastrian. It is this testimony impressed on the human heart with a quest for the transcendence that makes humans *homoreligious* even if the way the religious consciousness is played out is structured by society (Fattah, 2005).

Though it is true that everyone is born into the state of *fitrah* which is a state of purity, balance and moderation, this natural state can only be sustained by human choice of inclination because all humans are imbued with the inclinations of animalism and perfection of morality (Q91:7-10). According to Islam, human ethical disposition is not predetermined. People can be corrigible or saintly, incorrigible or devilish or in between the two. Hence, Islam emphasises the need for divine revelation to guide and orientate humans through a comprehensive and holistic educational system or Islamic education as would be shown shortly after defining the terms 'ethics' and 'morality.'

The terms 'ethics' and 'morality' which are usually used interchangeably, in reality, have different meanings. While the term ethics is derived from the Greek word, ethos which refers to a set of behavioural precepts, principles and concepts that are central to the life of a community, people and race, the term morality has a different origin. Morality, derived from the Latin word,

'mores' refers to peoples' conduct, practice and custom (Williams, 1972). In addition, Islamic scholars have used different terms such as *khulq, tahdib* and *adab* to refer to both ethics and morality. The plural of *Khulq* or *al-AKhalāq* is used by the Holy Prophet of God (SAW) to describe innate character, conduct and behaviour when he declared that the foremost divine purpose of his being sent by Allah as a prophet was to perfect good morals (Al- Misri, 1980). He showed by this declaration that he was sent as a prophet so as to instruct and guide humanity through his own personal conduct and moral perfection. Thus according to Muhammad Al-Ghazālī al-Misrī, the purpose of the great message of the Prophet was nothing but to strengthen the moral and the ethical conduct of people in order for them to see the practical demonstration of beauty and perfection before their eyes and in turn practice it consciously and with sound knowledge (Al Misri,1980).

THE NEED FOR ETHICS AND MORALITY

Today, the rise in unethical and corrupt activities has skyrocketed to an alarming rate globally. As far back as the early 1980s, it was observed that Nigeria for instance was confronting an unprecedented loss in morality (Ashaju, 1997 & Bako, 1992). In consequence, the young were initiated into drugs, armed robbery and sex work. Sex work and prostitution was so notorious especially in Edo State that the governor of the state had to launch an anti-prostitution and an anti-women trafficking programme. In the North of Nigeria, many students of the local Arabic schools resort to begging in order to complete their studies. Unfortunately, many of them have been used to unleash terror on their fellow Muslims and non-Muslims during crises (Uthman, 2002).

Corruption has also invaded the spiritual sphere. Today, religious leaders exploit, mislead and impoverish believers through their wrong teachings on prosperity, while they themselves swim in crass opulence. According to a one-time President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Archbishop of Lagos, Dr. Olubunmi Okogie, this phenomenon is nothing but an anthropocentric gospel that plays on peoples' superstitions and sorrows (Uthman, 2002). Paradoxically, Nigeria has for many years now been rated as a leading underdeveloped country with one of the highest rate of corruption in the world, according to the Corruption Perception Index of the Transparency International, in spite of its deep religiosity.

This pitiable and pathetic corrupt state is however not limited to Nigeria. According to Shamsher Mohamad, for instance, the failure of large corporations even in developed economies such as the USA can be traced to the financial fiascos or scams resulting in huge financial losses and erosion of public confidence in the financial system (Shamsaher,2002). These scandals that have rocked and are still likely to rock, the financial markets which permit Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and the management of various firms to make huge fortunes at the expense of their clients, some of whom lose all their life savings, point to unethical conduct in the world's financial markets. He argues that since all the financial scandals have called into question the ethics involved in the financial behaviour of the top management of some firms, there is a dire need for ethical behaviour for professionals in the financial industry since the industry cannot function without the elements of transparency, justice and prudence (Shamsaher,2002).

In addition, Abdul Kabir has shown that the natural disturbances, which are, indeed, divine means of maintaining balance in the world, do not equate the death toll from human made disasters. It is when humans tamper with the natural means of maintaining balance in the world and the sustainability of all the species of beings, that catastrophic disasters of unimaginable magnitude are inflicted on the entire environment and its differing and teeming communities. Consequently, human made disturbances such as wars, toxic wastes; pollution, diseases, global warning, desertification, soil degradation and erosion, are now gradually destroying the equilibrium of the ecosystem. The emergence of modern technology and industrialization marked the beginning of the prevailing catalogue of ecological problems. The inventions of science have made wars, which is a potent medium of earth degradation more horrible and destructive (Solihu, 2007).

ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

It is our contention, in this paper, that it is the absence of the teaching of communal, moral and religious ethics in the curriculum of most institutions of learning in Nigeria that is responsible for unethical and corrupt practices. For this reason, this paper presents the concept of Islamic education, its ultimate goals and how it affects individuals, professionals and work ethics. The terms, *Sunnah* and *adab*, are used by Islamic scholars to refer to the disciplining, training, nurturing and grooming of a person in the mind, soul and outward disposition. Hence the term *adab* is seen by Gibb (1979) as a synonym of *Sunnah* (practice of the Prophet). This is in line with the *Hadith* (saying of the Prophet) of 'A'ishah who once described the *Sunnah* as the Qur'an in practice if the *Sunnah* is interpreted to mean the perfect practice or conduct that demonstrates practically the teachings of the Qur'an. *Adab* therefore reflects the culmination of the process of learning and transmission

of knowledge which, as explained by al-Attas is the perfect man (*insān al-Kāmil*).

The individual, which the Islamic teachings and ethics through its educational structure, seeks to produce is one that is refined, cultured and disciplined and can therefore be instrumental in restoring Islamic leadership and scientific, moral and spiritual values. To him, *al-adīb* or the well-educated, cultured and disciplined, global scholar recognises the proper places of things in the divine scheme, has the ability to relate to all things in existence in a just manner (*al-'adl*) and exhibits just and appropriate comportment (*al-adab*). The definition of *al-adīb* or *al-ālim* (the scholar) can therefore be located in the qualities and characteristics of a Muslim scholar. According to Al-Imām al-Ghazālī, the scholar's autonomy and independence categorises such a scholar as *ālim al-sū* (evil scholar) or not. He upholds the commitment of scholars to knowledge regardless of remuneration, love for teaching, attachment to asceticism and disdain for worldly attractions as sound qualifications of Islamic intellectualism (Al Ghazzal, 1970).

Thus, the goal of education in Islam is to lead humankind to become true *'ibād* or servants of Allah which is translated into *khilāfah* or vicegerency of Allah. In other words, the search for knowledge in Islam is not essentially for material but divine pursuits and the attainment of perfection, orderliness and balance in the order of creation.

In the same manner, knowledge is meant to serve humanity as part of creation. The observation of Shamsher Mohamad that ethical behaviour must be instilled and nurtured through systematic training programmes that must be implemented consistently in the most objective way reveals the failure of the current Nigerian educational system at all levels and calls for a re-examination of the entire educational system that produces professionals and experts who have imbibed neither "character" nor "discipline" in the course of their study but are awarded degrees having being found "worthy in both learning and character" or "knowledge and discipline." Systematic moral and ethical training programmes, as taught by Islam, must begin vigorously at the pre-primary level, when the child is in the formative years. This could be seen in the story of Luqman and his son (Qur'an 31:12-18) which espouses ethical conduct in all aspects of life.

However, it would appear that whatever ethical behaviour is instilled and nurtured through systematic training programmes in the formative years of a child, is gradually lost in the tertiary institutions because, students, at that level, must be trained and taught in the most objective way and with "sincere efforts to uphold the desired code of ethics and conduct that transcends the political, social, religious and racial barriers."

In the current curriculum of Nigerian secondary education, religion has either been relegated to the background or removed outright. Thus, consciously or otherwise, God has been removed from the centre of the educational system. Tertiary education is not better either. Courses in religious morals and ethics are not made compulsory for students with the excuse that Universities are secular institutions. Herein must be located the failure of tertiary institutions of learning in sustaining and nurturing the code of ethics and conduct already instilled in their students right from childhood. This is so, because any attempt to divorce religious teachings from codes of ethics and conduct may not succeed. Tertiary education plays a significant role in employing logic and reason to help students to mould and improve on acceptable ethical behaviour.

THE FIVE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVES OF ISLAMIC LAW AND WORK ETHICS

Above and beyond the diversity of cultural attitudes lies the essential Islamic framework of unchangeable universal principles (*Thawābit*) that guide and define Muslims, uniting and giving them their membership of the *Ummah*. The distinction between unchangeable universal principles (*Thawābit*) and the changeable accidental principles (*Mutagayyirāt*) is what explains the unity of Muslims amidst cultural plurality and diversity. It is the fundamental unchangeable universal principles that determine what is permitted and what is prohibited. It is these principles that should form the core of educational institutions at all levels, especially of university teaching on ethics and morality from the Islamic perspectives.

The protection of human rights is one of the basic, fundamental and unchangeable universal principles of Islam. These rights revolve round the five ultimate objectives of the Islamic law (*al-maqasid al-khamsah*) which constitute the right of humans. The first right is clearly that of respect for religion. The right to religion embraces expression, conscience and assembly. To be in communion with God is the most central, essential longing of all humans and this is best effected and fulfilled in communal life. It is the right of every human to fulfill the *homoreligiousness* of humanity. The right to religion, conscience and assembly must not be sacrificed on any grounds (Q51:55, 10:99, and 2:156). The second is the respect for human life and dignity. Human life is sacred because of membership of the human race and must be protected from destruction, abuse and all forms of indignity (Q17: 31, 33 and 70). All humans have the right to live a dignified life and they should not merely survive in the margins of the society for any reason. They

have the right to the minimum amount of shelter, clothing and food necessary to live in all climates, weather and human communities.

The third is the right to intellectual development and education. Humans are the special creation of God and therefore the most honoured of His creatures. It therefore goes without saying that the development and protection of the human intellect is the inalienable right of every human. This right goes beyond the ability to read and write but to find, through education, the means and tools to self-development, actualisation and perfection. This means education must be functional and goes beyond producing selective and educationally dysfunctional people. It also means that it is functional education that is the right of every human in Islam (Q96:1-5).

The right to family, solidarity and political participation is the direct consequence of the three rights mentioned above. The desire for union with others is inseparable from human union with God, self dignity and fulfillment. Every spiritually, physically and intellectually fulfilled human will naturally seek to perpetuate the achievements in a union with others (Q4:1, 30: 21 and 49:13). The society should therefore prepare all its members psychologically, physically and intellectually for the responsibility of family, social and political life by providing opportunities for healthy family, social and political environment through meeting and marrying suitable spouses, premarital counseling, family support systems, child support systems, neighbourhood, local, national and even international partnerships and institutions. All these would assist in the fight against violence, poverty, corruption, unemployment and other family, social and political vices.

The last of the human rights which is germane to this paper is the respect for human labour and accumulation of wealth. The right to wealth accumulation is one of the essential goals of all humans according to Islam and an enabling environment must be provided for people to acquire property through their honest work and sweat. All humans must find a means of earning a livelihood in every society by virtue of their action and work and must not be allowed to become a community of beggars, parasites and miscreants who feed on the society and the work and sweat of others (Q36: 33-35, 4:29, 32 and 28:77).

The attainment of these rights forms the ultimate objectives of the Islamic Law (Al Shātibī,1976).The last of the ultimate objectives of the Islamic Law shows how Islam elevates diligence and hard work. It therefore does not permit any dichotomy between faith or spirituality and the struggle through hard work for worldly bounties or acquisition of wealth. In reality, it only condemns those who seek this worldly bounty while neglecting the

hereafter (Q2:200-202). This is embodied in the Islamic concept of Khilāfah, which according to Ismāīl Rājī al-Fāruqī, entails that Muslims should rise and throw themselves into the world to bring about the will of Allah (Uthman, 2006).

The above is the clearest testimony that Islam as a religion does not encourage laziness and idleness. Islam totally prohibits begging as a profession and orders all able-bodied persons to earn their livelihood. It only permits begging in a society that does not provide opportunities for all its able and strong members to earn legitimate living. Begging in that context, is to prevent them from causing chaos and anarchy in the society because of abject and absolute poverty and hunger (Uthman, 2006).

Islam therefore commands the acquisition of wealth through hard, honest and legitimate work. It also enables all humans to discover who they are, why they live and how to live a life of godliness. Islam affords them the opportunity of being brought up and living with Islamic ethics, being immersed in Islamic practice as well as observing the will of Allah, their creator in all their worldly endeavours which is the essence of worship or 'Ibadāh (Q51: 55-57, 4: 29, and 2:173). The Prophet also declared that whosoever is employed to do a job and does it well, receiving and giving dues will not cease being like a *Mujāhid* (one who fights in the cause of Allah), until he returns home. For work to qualify a Muslim for this lofty position of one who fights in the cause of Allah and therefore be regarded as an act of worship or 'Ibadāh', it must be guided by the following ethics that are unchangeable universal principles (Thawābit) in Islam.

1. Conducting the work as an *Amānah* for which an account will be rendered to Allah on the Day of Judgment (Q4:58).

2. Working in line with all Islamic terms of reference and conditions of service by both the employers and the employees because in Islam all pledges and contracts must be fulfilled (Q5:1 and 23:8) and Muslims must stand by their promises and contracts according to the Prophet.

3. Keeping proper account, record and documentation of all transactions, businesses and contracts (Q2:282).

4. Non-disclosure of official secrets and confidential reports because the Prophet said meeting are places of secrets.

5. Disclosure of accurate information about the job to officials and customers (Q3:161). The Prophet also declares that it is not permitted to offer any items for sale without disclosing its defect.

6. Cooperation in achieving righteous and not evil goals (Q5:2).

7.   Shunning corruption in all forms; for example, usury, bribery and inducement of officials (Q2:188). Abū Hurayrah also reported that the Prophet of Allah (SAW) cursed the giver and taker of bribes as well as the person who records any transaction involving bribery and usury.

8.   Avoidance of using official property for personal use. The Prophet was reported to have said that whosoever is employed to do a job and hides just a needle of what is lest will be betrayed by it on the day of judgment (Al-Misrī,1980).

9.   Equal, just and fair treatment of workers (Q4:135 and 5:8). The Prophet was reported to have said that whosoever is employed will be provided by the employer with a house, a ride and a spouse if not married. He also declared that the workers must be paid before their sweats dry up. He also said that 'I will oppose three people on the Day of judgment, and the last is whosoever employs a worker but refuses to pay in full (Al Misrī, 1980).

10. Separation of the sexes, even if they are working together (Q24:30-31). The Prophet declared that whosoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not be in seclusion with a woman without her relation because *Shaytān* will then be their third party (Al Misrī).

11. Proper and Moderate Dressing that covers the nudity and nakedness of a person (Q7:26). The Prophet was reported to have said that Allah curses a man who dresses like a woman and a woman who dresses like a man. He also declared that those who are dressed but naked will not enter paradise (Al-Misrī,1980).

12. Regular, punctual and congregational observance of prayers (Q23:9). The Prophet said that if it will not be too hard *Ummah*, he would have burnt down the houses of those who fail to attend the dawn prayers (Al Misrī, 1980,).

These Islamic ethical principles could easily be adopted as the basis of the teaching of ethics in the Nigerian educational system at all levels.

CONCLUSION

The need for institutions of learning, especially the universities to include religious ethics in their curriculum through which students can be practically groomed to practise what they learn in class, has been established in this paper. It must however be stated clearly that having ethical values in the curricula is half the solution. To make these ethical elements effective, the commitment of the staff and management of the institutions to ethical principles is required. Management and staff can play significant roles in encouraging students to behave ethically when they themselves behave ethically in their various interactions with the students whether formal or informal, official or unofficial, social, individual or collective.

Tertiary institutions of learning, such as universities, have the potential to play a decisive role in training professionals that are well imbued with the proper ethical framework that is needed today. Professionals trained through the Islamic educational principles explained in this paper must work for the invention, use ' and development of what is beneficial, useful and desirable to the universe at large, to humans as well as non-human, as service to humanity, and part of service to Allah, and as Allah's representatives or *Khulāfa'*.

The first step of Nigerian universities in this direction should therefore be the education of the heart and mind which awakens one to a consciousness and an awareness of one's responsibilities to the welfare of humanity and human civilization starting from the self, the family, and the community. Such education will enable students discover themselves and their environments and teach them how to live a life of godliness. This approach affords students the opportunity of being brought up with Islamic ethics, immersing themselves in Islamic practice as well as ensuring sound scientific, technological and humanistic education.

Again the paper reveals that all Muslims are obliged to take up the responsibility of hard and honest work. This is the path that must be trodden if people are to be free of today's corrupt and poverty stricken society. The application of Islamic universal principles and ethics in reclaiming political, socio-economic and other advancements is not negotiable. Through this, Nigerians in particular and the world at large, can reclaim their leading intellectual and moral position that will move the world from the precipice of global economic exploitation, political lawlessness and anarchy to a common wealth of believers who reject a world without morality, conscience and religion. It is only by linking humanity with their primordial testimony to their Creator that the world can achieve true economic, political and social security and prosperity.

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