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WORK AND ITS EFFECT ON PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICANS

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Acculturation through Work

One of the major changes that Africans undergo in their acculturation to Western ways of life is their gradual absorption into a work economy.

The magnitude of this change is evident when we contrast the role of work in the traditional Bantu cultures of Southern Africa with the part it plays in our contemporary society.

These particular African economies, before they were disturbed by European settlement in this region, were of the subsistence type, devoted both to pastoral and to agricultural pursuits, with some supplementary hunting and food gathering. Crafts were closely associated with, and subsidiary to, these activities. Work therefore satisfied subsistence needs and very little else. Other human needs, for conformity, deference, personal security, found expression through other cultural institutions and through pursuits subserving the order and well-being of the community. All these activities were largely predetermined, a function of one's station in the community in terms of age, sex, kinship, descent, and family tradition. Individual choice or need for self-expression had little to do with it and to the extent that such a need existed at all in certain cultures, it found an outlet through personal style in artistic activities, songs of praise, story-telling, or acts of prowess which might occasionally be associated with work (e.g. dare-devilry by men cutting brushwood from high trees in Bemba country, Northern Rhodesia, Richards 1939).

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*Participants are requested to read this paper beforehand as a theoretical introduction to this topic. The speaker has indicated that he expects to devote a substantial part of his time to the results (not here incorporated) of his recent investigation on the subject.

There are also a few tasks, such as that of the diviner, that can be looked upon as institutionalised outlets for somewhat deviant personalities with more idiosyncracy than the normal run of tribal men.

By contrast, the subsistence role of work in the money economy of Western states with full employment and welfare laws has become submerged under layers of other needfulfilment functions. This expansion of its elementary role is a consequence of the dominant position which work has acquired in our social order. Work has become the major waking activity for the majority of people for most of their lives. It has created new social institutions and new forms of community life. The life of the city in particular demands different interests, attitudes and habits than those found among people living more closely in tune with the rhythms of nature and who are more dependent on the capriciousness of climate. The entire values-system of Western civilisation has been coloured by the control which man has acquired over his natural environment by virtue of science and work, to the point of the apotheosis of work itself as an ultimate good, as indispensable to the well-being of man as the air he draws and the food he consumes.

This ideal has undoubtedly been dimmed in the twentieth century by the phenomenal increase in productivity, the emancipation of labour and the ascendancy of ideas of individual freedom and the right to "a good time". Work and its fruits nevertheless remain the major channel through which Western man seeks to express his individuality or to establish and maintain his status. This is reflected in the general pre-occupation of the young and their parents with the choice of a career, and the faint contempt with which the term "playboy" is used. It is equally evident in the reluctance of ageing workers to accept retirement even when there is no economic reason why they should go on working.

Hence it remains a major difference between Bantu culture and our own that a number of social needs which played no part in traditional work activities have become associated with work behaviour in our own industrial society; that new needs, in particular needs concerning the self, have arisen which again tend to find their fulfilment through the medium of work; and that the individualism encouraged by wage-earning, urban living and the weakening of caste and class distinctions can have a relatively free rein in the choice of occupational and communal role.

Inevitably, the absorption of Africans into a world with such a vastly different social structure, institutions, values and habitual way of life brings far-reaching personality changes in its wake. The demands of the work situation which have so strongly influenced the character of Western civilisation, are the principal means whereby these changes are accomplished. The following are the major operating influences :

1. African migrant workers, though many of them remain wedded to a subsistence economy and do not change their fundamental attitude towards their own traditional objectives, nevertheless acquire new habits, attitudes and insights, such as a new awareness of the importance of time and punctuality, a responsiveness to discipline, an appreciation of the need for precision. They begin to discover the concept of individuality by receiving some recognition for their own capacities and achievements, and by being held responsible for their own actions. They acquire new skills, and develop new material wants. Even though they may revert to the old ways when back in their villages, a duality has nevertheless been established. They can shift from one set of attitudes to the other, and can make a choice between two worlds. How the choice is eventually made is a problem that requires further research though there is some evidence that personality factory play a part, the temperamentally active and robust spirits being more ready to risk the hazards of a new way of life (Glass, 1961a)

2. Those who eventually break away from the traditional environment must gradually accustom themselves to a way of life in which work is the essential condition of their new existence. To retain one's job, to advance in it and to build up some economic security, permanent commitment to industrial employment is essential. There is evidence that such industrial commitment may co-exist with a persistent rural orientation (Glass, 1962). There are many stable industrial workers who retain their land rights, who keep their families in the country and who regularly visit them when they have their annual leave. This is, however, a transition phenomenon and permanent commitment to the town or city is ultimately inevitable.

With urban living comes a new set of social relations. Traditional institutions such as the family are modified. The dependence of the urban family on a wage-earner,

and its restricted quarters, do not allow for the extended family. Other institutions, like initiation rites or the age regiment give way to new social forms like the school, the trade union or the gang. Child education ceases to be a communal affair in which strictly prescribed lines are followed. Instead, it becomes the haphazard responsibility of individual parents, who may both be away at work all day. They may themselves have only a vague notion of the standards to be inculcated and little interest in, or capacity for, their enforcement.

3. There results a change in personality-structure, away from tradition-directed towards more individual, often more undisciplined, behaviour. In the money economy, new needs arise, such as the desire for wealth, and old needs, such as the desire for security and status, find new objects. Prescribed roles, related to subsistence activities or tribal organisation, are replaced by others that arise from economic necessity, from personal initiative, from the responsibilities of the work situation or the demands of urban communal life. The emergence of new leadership roles, dissociated from tribal status, such as those of the supervisor, the trader, the professional man, the teacher, is particularly significant.

4. Work also performs a vital socialising function. The unstable urban-home may be less capable of exercising discipline and imposing standards of conduct than the employer with his sanctions of dismissal. The work environment makes limited demands of an objective kind that can be readily understood and that thus provide a basis for habit-formation whilst its discipline inculcates self-control.

5. Finally, it is at work that real contact is established between black and white. Socially the races scarcely meet. In the streets and public places they are contiguous, yet utterly remote. But at work they communicate, collaborate, have joint purposes and loyalties. However much these relationships may be coloured by caste and rank distinctions, by hostility or fear, they are at least relationships which for better or for worse determine values, attitudes, self-images, strivings and the stability of the personality itself.

In order to appraise the nature and extent of the personality changes that are brought about by this process of acculturation, it will be useful to look at personality in terms of needs and motives, as these are most prominently involved in work behaviour. The

conceptual scheme to be used for this purpose is that put forward by Maslow (1954).

A Theory of Human Motivation

According to Maslow, human needs are organised in a hierarchial order in which the higher needs do not become activated until the lower ones are progressively satisfied. The physiological needs form the base of the hierarchy. Under normal conditions, in a well-ordered society, and in normally adjusted, healthy persons, these needs are chronically satisfied, and therefore "cease to exist as active determinants or organisers of behaviour" (Maslow, ibid, p. 84). They are subserved by habits, and continue to exist only in potential form, to emerge when the organism is physiologically thwarted in some way. Maslow's hierarchical activation principle can be most clearly demonstrated with reference to the hunger need. Under famine conditions, no other interests exist but the thought of food and all behaviour will be directed towards obtaining it. Other activities cease, even when time is available for their exercise. Under such conditions, men "may fairly be said to live by bread alone." (ibid. p. 83).

At the next level of the hierarchy we find the safety needs, which impel man to seek an orderly, predictable, secure existence. These needs too are generally satisfied for the majority of people in stable Western societies during peace-time conditions, apart from the poor and the increasing numbers who suffer from psychoneurotic troubles or who are unduly anxious about atomic fall-out, threats of war or other social upheavals.

Next to emerge are the needs for love, affection and belongingness. These are far more a matter of individual circumstances, and hence their satisfaction is less assured. The need for love is best met in the normal family context. But there are many other social groups to which one can belong and from which the individual may draw support, friendship or affection.

Merely to belong, however, is not sufficient. Men also desire to be well though of, and to be able to think well of themselves. The esteem needs, therefore, are of two kinds: first, self-esteem, "The desire for strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for mastery and competence, for confidence in the face of the world and for independence and freedom"; in the second place, deference: "the desire for reputation or prestige ... status, dominance, recognition, attention, importance or appreciation." (ibid. p. 90).

One would expect these needs to be among the most active in determining the everyday behaviour of a large proportion of normal people.

The need for self-actualisation, or desire for fulfilment is "the tendency ... to become more and more what one is capable of becoming"(ibid. p. 92). It is not activated until all lower needs are reasonably satisfied, and then becomes the only and persistent mainspring of action. This does not mean that it always assumes a lofty form such as the search for saintliness, scientific or artistic creativeness. At particular ability levels, self-actualisation may express itself through the achievement of craftmanship, or athletic prowess, and in less complicated personalities, to be a perfect mother or excellent second-in-command.

Maslow stresses that the gratification of higher needs has desirable social consequences. "People who have enough basic satisfaction to look for love and respect (rather than just food and safety) tend to develop such qualities as loyalty, friendliness, and civic consciousness, and to become better parents, husbands, teachers, public servants, etc." (ibid. p. 149). This comment indicates how needs can become a determining factor in personality development. He also makes the apparently paradoxical point that people who seek satisfaction of the higher needs and who by virtue of this fact belong to the more socialised section of the community, at the same time tend to pursue highly individualistic goals. Their individualism is not exercised in an exploitative manner, at the expense of others, but adds to the greater wealth and variety of social life and culture (ibid. p. 149).

Work as a Means of Need Satisfaction

Maslow's need-hierarchy theory is helpful in gaining an understanding of the multiplicity of motives that may be involved in work behaviour.

Continuously expanding economies, labour legislation and social security ensure a reasonable satisfaction of the physiological and security needs for the majority of men in fully developed areas, and these needs therefore do not enter at all prominently into work-motivation, apart from a preference for steady jobs, pension privileges, medical benefit funds, by those in whom the security need remains relatively activated. We find the physiological needs most prominently involved in the food-gathering and shelter-building activities of such primitive peoples as the Bushmen and Aborigines. In subsistence economies involving animal husbandry

and agriculture, the security need has emerged, because men labour not only to still the immediate pangs of hunger, but also to store food in anticipation of future arousal. However, uncertainties about harvests and the hazards of cattle-raising, which result from disease and droughts, bring the physiological need frequently to the fore. Seasonal hunger periods are indeed a feature of the life of certain African tribes (Richards et al, 1936). The work behaviour of the migrant mine-labourer also remains fairly close to these elementary need-levels. In an investigation on seasonal fluctuations in labour supply to the South African gold mines, Glass (1957) has shown that the need to eke out harvests is one of the major motivating factors which induce labourers to come to the mines, though social needs (status, kinship relations), satisfied by means of cattle which migrant labourers hope to buy out of their wages, also play a part.

The need to belong has become an outstanding feature of twentieth century work behaviour. It has become increasingly difficult for the average town-dweller to feel an integral part of a group and to share in communal activities. Among the major causes of the decline in group participations are the following : population mobility, the size and constant expansion of towns, the amount of time one has to spend getting to and from work, mass entertainment of the watching rather than participating type, lack of confluence of interests such as was experienced in the village or small provincial town of some generations ago, where almost everyone knew everyone else and all fulfilled roles which sprang from the organismic life of the community. In a small way, the work situation has begun to provide a substitute for the lost sense of belongingness, for here again one can become a member of an interacting and continuous group, with some identity and sharing a common purpose. The identification of the individual with the corporate body and its purpose is actively encouraged by the employer as it contributes to work morals and motivation. Another factor that tends to enhance the significance of the social role of the working group is the relative lack of scope in industrial work for the exercise of individual interests, skills and initiative. Hence it is from the contacts with fellow-workers, from membership in formal and informal groupings that develop in and around the work situation, that major satisfactions can be derived.

Within the working group, thus considered as a social organism, there clearly exist ample opportunities for the satisfaction of the needs for deference or other-esteem. The work situation provides a wide range of status levels, some of which carry over

into the social life of the community at large. There is scope for assigned leadership through supervisory functions, and the more spontaneous leadership of the elected office as shop-steward, representative on works committee, or as spokesman of an informal group. But it is not only through the medium of status and leadership roles that the need for deference is satisfied at work. One may have prestige and enjoy the esteem of one's fellow-workers because of one's capabilities or personality qualities and such esteem may be expressed in a number of ways in the course of everyday relations both on and off the job.

The desire for competence, achievement, and independence, treated by Maslow as the self-respect component of the esteem needs, can, from the point of view of work behaviour, be more appropriately considered as a separate component in the motivational pattern. These needs have to do with the relationship between the worker and his task rather than with interpersonal relations. Such matters as interest in the task as such, confidence in being able to perform it well, opportunities to use one's skill and intelligence, to be original or creative are involved. It is only when we come to the need for autonomy and freedom, which in the work situation means being able to use one's initiative, being given responsibility, working without close supervision, that we touch on the other-esteem needs again; for except in the case of self-employment, such autonomy implies a particular relationship with one's supervisor or the achievement of high managerial status and the recognition that preceded it.

At this stage it would appear that it is not necessary to invoke the final need in Maslow's hierarchy, namely that of self-realisation, to account for all that there is in work motivation. Whatever one may do in pursuit of this need is already implicit in the actions of a man who has sought autonomy, the respect of his fellows by virtue of his personal qualities, and self-respect by virtue of his achievements. A similar point is made by Barnes (1960) who also questions the hierarchy concept. He holds that safety needs overlap all higher needs and that whenever any of these is threatened, one's sense of personal security is immediately involved. One is inclined to agree that the belonging, self-esteem and other-esteem needs do not conform to the hierarchical pattern, and that all can be activated simultaneously; but the safety need as it emerges in the phylogenesis of work behaviour, and as it enters into employment in the sense of a desire for security of tenure, retirement benefits and the like, is a separate motivational entity which Maslow has correctly placed as preceding the higher needs.

Work and African Personality Development

The gradual evolution in Africans of work behaviour appropriate to the advanced economies of the twentieth century should be accompanied by the successive emergence in them of the social and ego needs discussed above, unless of course their process of work-adaptation should take an unexpectedly different course. This is unlikely, for Sherwood (1957), Glass (1960, 1961a, 1961b), Glass and Biesheuvel (1961) have already shown that the more fully Africans become integrated with a Western way of living, the more closely their work habits, attitudes and aspirations begin to resemble our own. There are differences, no doubt, but then there is also a wide gap between the urban life of Africans and of whites, and a still wider gap between the African's statutory and economic position in the State and that of the average white citizen.

A number of investigations carried out at the N.I.P.R. lend some support to the hypothesis that certain needs which are either absent in tribal society, or expressed only through stereotyped roles in an institutionalised form, do make their appearance in an individual way with industrialisation, education and occupational advancement. It has already been pointed out that the migrant mineworker is still essentially part of a subsistence economy and that his work on the mine is very largely subsidiary to this. As such it satisfies in the first place his safety needs and very little else. His need to belong, in the sense of feeling identified with his job and working group, is not activated because it is satisfied by his membership of his kinship group and village community (Reader, 1959), and it does not get involved at all in these alien work interludes where even the compound in which he is accommodated, with its constantly shifting population, provides little scope for the emergence of group feelings. His position is not unlike that of the army recruit, posted for a period of unavoidable military training to some regiment, generally not of his own choosing and to which he develops no personal attachment. In the same way, large numbers of mine labourers are merely assigned to particular mines without exercising any choice. Yet there are others who do specify where they wish to serve and here we have the emergence of the need to belong in its alternate sense, as the need for love or affectionate relations. Translated into the realities of the work situation, this means the need for considerate treatment from supervisors and management. In an unpublished study carried out on behalf of a mining group, Hudson (1954) found that the workers' choice of mine was determined in the first place by the way in which labourers were handled by boss boys and white supervisors and the trouble taken by management to

make compound life pleasant, to deal with enquiries or complaints, and to render minor personal services. This motivation had nothing to do with any feeling of identification with that particular mine or working group, which is hardly possible in any case because of the size, composition and mobility of the labour force. There were no indications that ego-needs, either self- or other-esteem, were activated at all.

It is not unlikely that in the great significance which migrant labourers attach to good treatment we have not only a natural reaction to the manner in which they are frequently supervised, but also a manifestation of the need for dependence described by Mannoni (1956) as typical of a people who have lived for a long time under a colonial regime. This would then be a specific form of the need to belong, which one would only expect to occur under the particular circumstances of conquest by people with a more advanced civilisation, who continue to exercise mastery over those they have conquered. A dependent attitude is evident in various aspects of the behaviour of the migrant mineworker. Their very choice of mine, rather than of industrial, employment is dictated by their fear of having to fend for themselves in the hurly-burly of the urban African townships, and their knowledge that in the mine compounds they will find themselves in a protected, paternalistic environment where their material needs will be met without any effort on their part, and their lives are almost entirely organised for them. (Hudson, 1954; Glass, 1957). There is evidence that as these migrant workers are weaned away from mine employment and become more independent, their need to belong assumes a more advanced form and begins to seek an outlet through positive and reciprocal interpersonal relations.

Compounded migrant labour is also employed in certain industries, but the more common pattern in secondary industry is to employ African labour from townships on unskilled, semi-skilled, and certain categories of skilled work. In the Johannesburg area, less than 10% of this industrial labour force is truly migrant and very nearly half is completely urbanised and has lost all contact with the rural areas (Biesheuvel, 1962). Among these industrial workers, safety needs in the form of a strong preference for jobs which are reasonably secure, or for employment by firms which are reasonable about laying off or retrenching labour are among the most important motivating factors (Cortis, 1957). Safety needs of a very different kind, arising from the health and accident hazards associated with certain types of work are also frequently activated (Cortis, 1962). The need to belong once again merely

occurs in the form of a need for dependence, i.e. a demand for good treatment by supervisors, with little mention being made of the need to be friendly with fellow-workers. Opportunities for advancement, which could be looked upon as indicative of the need for achievement, began to make their appearance in this population, but status or other deference needs were not mentioned, presumably because no opportunities for activating them existed and this group still functioned at the lower hierarchy levels where satisfaction of the safety, good treatment, and belonging needs were still their major concern.

A comprehensive study of the work aspirations and attitudes of an African middle-class group, mainly teachers, social workers, nurses and clerks, was carried out by R. Sherwood (1957, 1958). This group also cites "pleasant human relations" as a source of job satisfaction, but this need is now no longer confined to relations with superiors but also extends to colleagues and therefore has a much more positive character. This motive to belong and enjoy friendship outweights the safety need, which is, however, still operative, particularly among the clerks for whom the security provided by public service appointments is a positive incentive, despite certain disadvantages associated with their employment by the State. This group also expresses a need to acquire higher skills, more education, new personality qualities. The need for self-improvement thus makes its first significant appearance in this middle class group, though consistent with Maslow's hierarchical conception, at a lower level of endorsement than the other needs that have been encounted so far. Here then we have the emergence of an individualistic motivation; but it is offset by the need to be of service to the community and to further African advancement, which this group in fact claims to be its overriding work incentive.

Its pre-eminence as the major form in which the need for other-esteem shows itself in this group is the result of the complex social situation in which members of the African middle class find themselves. They are marginal people in a number of ways, culturally remote from tribal Africans, educationally and occupationally distant from the majority of urban dwellers with whom they generally share the same neighbourhoods, socially segregated from their white colleagues with whom they often share the same work environment, always subordinate to whites who occupy the senior positions, and not infrequently treated in a manner which they consider humiliating. Those in clerical positions in Government service may suffer rejection by certain sections of their own people because of their participation in the administration of

vexatious regulations. They lack the compensating advantage of complete identification with the employing body and of acceptance as colleagues by white public servants, occupationally if not socially. This accounts for the frequent references that are made to unpleasant relations with authority in Sherwood's middle-class African group. In comparing her findings with those of Centers (1948), obtained from white male American professional and white-collar workers, she found a highly significant difference in respect of the frequency of such reactions.

Under such circumstances, the opportunities to achieve status or to exercise mutual influence between status levels, both aspects of the need for other-esteem, are limited. Hence the search for alternate outlets through service to their own community. They see opportunities to play a leadership role as teachers, lawyers, politicians, social workers, and to do constructive work in furthering African advancement. Their higher wage level enables them to help relatives, an obligation that is still honoured to some extent even in urban areas. Social service and leadership provide, besides, a way of satisfying the other-esteem needs, which fits in with the tradition of a communal way of life, not so remote from the experience of urban dwellers as to have become completely extinct. There is still movement between the rural and urban areas, and a fair percentage of township people who continue to live in both worlds. One surmises also that rejection by the white groups with which educationally and occupationally they now have so much in common, plays some part in the stress that is placed on the importance of service to one's own people, to the point of an over-valuation of this social goal.

In the course of her studies of African middle-class workers, Sherwood has arrived at the conclusion that they tend to conform to Riesman's other-directed personality type. The difference between tradition-directed and other-directed personalities is that whereas the former lack individuality, being little more than the vehicle of fixed social forms, the latter, because of a sensitivity to the esteem of other people which is implanted in them early in life, are ever responsive to the changing habits and values of the particular group that happens to be their reference point. In their striving for successful recognition by others, in which anxiety lest they should fail is the impelling, and thus conformity-producing factor, they reveal the possession of individual selfhood which is lacking in the tradition-directed man. The latter has no choice of goals, the former has an embarrassment of them. This choice is not dictated by the convictions and stable values of the inner-directed personality but by what those around him seem to value

most highly (Gutman and Wrong, 1961, p. 299). The picture drawn by Mkele (1961) of African middle-class life provides a vivid illustration of the current behaviour patterns.

The work situation and urban life are probably the determining factors in the other-directed personality development of Africans. The first generation growing up in the cities had less to learn that was useful from their parents than from those in their environment who had moved higher up the acculturation ladder, and particularly from whites, who provided the models for many new behaviour forms. This applied particularly at school and at work. The generally prevailing pattern of race relations made it important to be highly responsive and docile towards the requirements of one's white masters if one wanted to be free from the anxiety of displeasing them. Success and advancement, retaining one's job and promotion, depended largely on their goodwill and patronage.

One concludes that in the transition from one form of society to another, from a traditional to a new group responsiveness, African personality has gained an important new dimension, individuality. But it is an individuality that remains closely linked to non-individual goals. The higher needs are more strongly directed towards social than towards individual objectives. Self-esteem is less important than other-esteem, and the need for self-actualisation does not express itself in highly personalised and egocentric forms. This is illustrated by the complete absence of all references to "freedom and independence" as job satisfactions in Sherwood's middle-class African group. Such responses were given by 8.9% of the white-collar and 18.3% of the professional white American males studied by Centers. We have seen that the need for freedom and independence is the upper point in the modified Maslow hierarchy where the self-esteem and other-esteem aspects of the ego-needs meet.

The analysis presented in this paper provides in the first place some, as it were, phylogenetic support for the conceptions underlying Maslow's need hierarchy hypothesis. Concurrently with the evolution of African work-behaviour, through successive stages of involvement and occupational advancement, there progressively emerged new and higher needs, or existing needs were transferred from traditional social settings to Western work situations. To some extent also, it would appear that activation of higher needs depended on at least partial satisfaction of lower ones. In the second place, some tentative evidence was provided that the demands of the work situation, and the opportunities it presents for need-satisfaction, are powerful determinants of African personality development.

In order to test this hypothesis further, an experimental study has been carried out to assess the work attitudes and preferences of groups of migrant mineworkers, urbanised industrial workers, high school pupils, and middle-class professional people. The results of this study will be presented in a second paper.

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