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TSIKA, HUNHU AND THE MORAL EDUCATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN*

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THIS ARTICLE EXAMINES the concept *tsika* from two different points of view, the analytical and the empirical. I attempt, firstly, to elucidate the meaning of the term and its philosophical relationship to the concept *hunhu*, and, secondly, to explore its relevance to a Kantian understanding of morality. The point here is to show that *tsika* morality is different from Kantian morality, being tied, conceptually, to social beliefs and practices. I then describe ways in which *tsika* is conceptualized by teachers and parents and the importance attributed to the teaching of *tsika*. The case of the education of Tonga children is then outlined and this leads me to conclude that in many instances learning *tsika* may be an alienating experience for children. Finally, I suggest that the formal qualities of *tsika*, particularly the fact that the concept can be taught only through an application of itself, may, if over-zealously applied, run counter to the aim of fostering moral autonomy in children. I conclude by suggesting that the concept is best understood within the framework of a utilitarian moral system.

A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF *TSIKA*

Tsika

The Shona term *tsika* refers to knowing or possessing and being able to use the rules, customs and traditions of society. *Tsika* is what a child is expected to learn both at home and school: a good child is a child who possesses *tsika*.

The term covers more than what contemporary Westerners would call 'good manners' and less than what the Kantian would call strictly moral behaviour. It seems closer to the concept of decorum, defined as 'that which is proper, suitable or seemly; fitness, propriety, congruity' (*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (3rd edn., 1975), I, 502). Naturally, that which is considered seemly is considered so in relation to some set of established rules: the better the behaviour approximates to the rules, the more seemly it is considered.

Samkange and Samkange (1980, 74) say that behavioural signs of *tsika* or good breeding are 'politeness, civility and circumlocution'. *Tsika* thus

* I acknowledge with grateful thanks help from those who discussed the meaning of these concepts with me, particularly Dr Jamie Kurasha, philosopher, University of Zimbabwe, who read the first draft of this paper, and Dr Pamela Reynolds, anthropologist, University of Cape Town. Any errors remaining in my interpretation, needless to say, are my own responsibility.

embraces what we would call simple etiquette (how to address elders, for example, and table manners), virtues such as obedience and paying attention to what others say, and prudential behaviour. This last virtue is particularly important in relation to the ways in which girls and unmarried women conduct themselves. *Tsika* includes modesty, self-respect and the ability to reject the amorous advances of young men, together with the strength of will to resist one's own physical and emotional impulses. The possession of *tsika* fosters self-control. According to my sources, a well brought-up child invariably grows into a respectable person.

Sociologists sometimes regard the moral norms of a society as representing that society's perception of ideal behaviour. If morality is to be considered in this restrictive light, moral rules must be seen as sets of concepts which are situational or blurred (in the sense that they apply to a wide range of behaviour). These concepts have a social origin and function. It follows from this reading of moral life that there is no point in possessing virtuous impulses, such as compassion, if they are not transformed into actions which do some concrete good. Equally, it may not be easy to distinguish between people whose behaviour, although in accordance with moral norms, may hide an evil heart and those whose heart and actions are both morally good.

The point is whether we are constrained by this concept to consider morality in such blurred sociological and functionalist — and indeed, situational — terms. It seems that, if we are thinking in Shona, we are so constrained. Morally good actions can come from evil intentions and it is the end result which counts, not the motive.

Although there are words in Shona which deal with concepts like prudence, good manners, morality and self-respect — *uchenjeri*, *tsika*, *unaki*, *dharakubhe* — they are all covered under the umbrella concept *tsika* (although the higher level of morality is dealt with in the term *hunhu*). A child is expected to learn *tsika* without questioning in a protesting spirit. To challenge *tsika* is to challenge the authority and permanence of the social structure, what sociologists call the moral order (using 'moral' here in a very wide sense); it is to display one's own lack of breeding and to indicate that one's teacher (*tete* or *sekuru*) has failed in her/his teaching. Moreover, a child — and possibly even an adult — cannot question *tsika* because it encompasses the way things are done and the way things are; that is, it provides the framework within which actions are judged and evaluated. To learn the framework is to absorb the conditions for entering the moral order of responsible adult life.

Tsika* and *hunhu

The concept *hunhu* means 'personhood'. This concept, Samkange and Samkange note, is more often used negatively than positively (1980, 40).

Its root *-nhu-* is related to the Ndebele root *-ntu-* which forms the singular noun *mntu* (a person), and *bantu* (the people). Anthropologists will already be aware that the practice of calling one's own group 'the human beings', 'the people', is not restricted to Africa: it is also used, for example, by Amerindians. *Munhu* can mean either an ordinary person or a truly and fully moral person, that is, one who has morally worthy human qualities. The concept *hunhu* gains its force in contrast with pre-human or animal behaviour. A person has moral attributes not granted to a wild animal. Wild animals 'do not have customs. A wild animal will allow its own son to make love to it' (Samkange and Samkange 1980, 94).

The relationship between *tsika* and *hunhu* which is of interest in this paper is as follows: a good child is expected to know the rules, customs and principles which make up *tsika* but not to show the attributes of a morally autonomous person — *hunhu* — until around the age of puberty. Yet, like *hunhu*, *tsika* has a cognitive element: it must be learned in order to form the basis for actions.

Hunhu requires both that one knows (has learned) *tsika* and that one can reflect upon, and take responsibility for, one's own behaviour. A higher level of cognitive activity as well as moral self-consciousness is required of *hunhu*. Perhaps a person with *hunhu* will agree with Socrates that 'an unexamined life is not worth living'. But knowledge of custom (*tsika*) is a prerequisite for *hunhu*. An animal cannot be a moral agent because animal behaviour is neither regulated nor constituted by rules. But human behaviour is everywhere so regulated and the rules have the character of social fact, being impartially obligatory on everyone according to his or her status and sex (Durkheim, [1895]1935, 13).

It follows that not every adult will display the knowledge of or regard for *tsika* and the reflective, autonomous, and therefore rational, character of a full human being. In particular, a *murungu* (white person), although a flesh and blood person, is seldom *hunhu* in the full sense except in the unlikely event that she knows *tsika*. Thus, the elderly mother of a colleague exclaimed to her son in Shona when I attempted to greet her in the proper Shona way: 'But this *murungu* is a *munhu*'. But any adult who fails to act according to the social rules displays her lack of moral autonomy.

We can refer back to Kant for an elucidation of this apparent contradiction. For the Kantian, it is only when one acts deliberately in accordance with the Moral Law — of one's own free will — that one displays moral autonomy and thus personhood. To act against the Moral Law contrary to one's clear deliberations is to display *akrasia* (that is, moral incontinence). In Shona society the moral rule is usually thought to be synonymous with social rules. For although there is a God (*Mwari*), he is neither the source of morality nor the evaluator of moral behaviour, to reward and punish, as Christians believe. 'The high god', comments

Bourdillon (1982, 267), 'is too remote and his interests are too broad to concern himself with private individuals and their problems'. The source of morality, therefore, is society itself and moral goodness resides in the concrete way in which our actions create well-being.

As *tsika* is the sum of social rules, the society as a whole is responsible for its enforcement. A Shona proverb says, 'you do not educate your child for yourself alone'. Samkange and Samkange (1980, 78) comment, 'education is for society by society'. Traditionally, any elder can, therefore, chastise a child who is behaving contrary to the rules (*ibid.*). Children, unlike fully adult persons, may be physically punished. This notion is reinforced in the complicated rules of address and deportment, whereby a child must address a whole range of persons as *baba* (father) and *sekuru* (uncle) or *amai* (mother) and *ambuya* (grandmother) and behave with appropriate respect towards these people (*ibid.*, 72).

If we trace the traditional ideal (and it is more correct to see it as an ideal than an ideological position) concerning adult-child relationships in contemporary educational practice, we arrive at an enhanced understanding of such remarks as 'the headmaster is the eye of the parents' and 'the teacher stands in place of the parents'. Professional teachers, who may or may not be part of the particular community of the school, are expected to take up and extend the role of adult or elder in the community by teaching, among other things and in the traditional way, *tsika*. Samkange and Samkange believe that the concept of *hunhu* is strongly reinforced by, as well as oriented towards, a collectivist, social morality. They observe (in chapters 6 and 7) that traditional society promoted restitutive rather than retaliative justice (in contrast to the Durkheimian hierarchy of mechanical and organic solidarity) which emphasized the restoration of the entire community to relations of peace.

In this light (pretending for the moment that traditional culture is intact in the contemporary world) it is easy to understand that parents sometimes ask teachers to beat their children. If it is believed that a child is unlikely to understand the point of the rules, let alone display moral autonomy (*hunhu*), then it makes sense to treat that child differently from an adult and to try to train him through corporal punishment; for parents may see the rule against corporal punishment as a dereliction of the teacher's duty to inculcate moral behaviour into the child. To parents, corporal punishment may seem a reasonable way of inculcating *tsika* so long as the severity of the punishment takes into consideration age and circumstance.

A woman occupies an ambiguous place in the moral system. For although she is *munhu*, she may be beaten as a child is, as we observe from the following quotations (Samkange and Samkange, 1980, 96): 'Mlotshwa would not have ordered the son of Matatu to be whipped if he

had been a full grown man and not "only a child". Yet, in the novel quoted, Mamsipa, wife of Matatu, is flogged by her husband for adultery. Samkange and Samkange continue, 'in African society, one does not thrash an adult. To whip an adult is, therefore, to treat him like a child.' They also state: 'the society regarded her as an adult even though, to her husband, she was a minor under his and her father's perpetual tutelage'. While a full-grown man is rarely beaten, a full-grown woman may be; that is, she may be treated by her husband as a child.

The traditional position of a woman is that of a minor under the legal guardianship of male kin. Her children, for example, are part either of her own family (if she has not been properly married) or of her husband's. She herself 'belongs' first to her own family and then to her husband's.* A feudal relationship of rights and duties between a woman and her own — or her husband's — male kin means that there must always be tension between the concept of an adult woman as *munhu* and her traditional position as a dependent. We may conclude that it is this tension which in part accounts for the way in which women often present themselves as non-autonomous agents, that is, as knowing *tsika* and showing all the outward signs of decorum, but lacking the qualities of moral reflectiveness and moral judgement of *munhu*. We may also conclude that it is this tension which accounts for some of the difficulties of educating girls in our society.

One further point must be noted. The Kantian moral agent displays her moral autonomy by acting freely in terms of the Moral Law which she has independently come to know through rational reflection. But the Moral Law is characterized by the categorical imperative. It is not a mere maxim of conduct — one which an individual or a social group may choose to follow, or not, depending on the goal or interest. The motive which directs a practical maxim is, ultimately, self-interest, although it may come in the form of seeking to bring about the happiness of other individuals, or, indeed, the happiness of the whole social group. For Kant, prudential considerations like self-love and self-interest arise from subjectively felt desire and, because of the very nature of desire, it cannot be categorically binding on all human beings.

It is only human reason which can be the universal source of moral behaviour because it is only reason which is free from subjective impulses. The Moral Law is, therefore, in a completely different category of activity from purely social rules. Beck (1960, 79) remarks that, according to Kant, social rules (such as are embodied in wise saws and proverbs) serve as a guide for 'the stupid' who do not trust themselves to act wisely in the

* Quotation marks appear around the concept 'belong' to alert readers to the fact that, ideally, all individuals 'belong' to some social group or other.

complexity of particular cases and who therefore fall back upon some simple standard commonplace.

We recall that for Kant there is only one Moral Law. It is of a different order from the various practical manifestations of moral action which he called practical maxims of conduct and which are heteronomous, rather than categorical, in character:

A reason which is the slave of the passions, a will which follows the promptings of desire and chooses laws of nature as its guide in satisfying them, a principle or maxim whose content is the condition of an act of choice, and the imperative which directs this choice of a specific action — all these can be called 'heteronomous' even if the laws are laws of nature or even of God (Beck, 1960, 102-3).

The Moral Law is prior to, and indeed, the basis of, social rules — even the basis of the rules of God.

Socially given moral rules or maxims may serve us well in times of social stability, but in times of dramatic social change maxims may fail us. For moral codes lag behind economic and political changes which render them not only obsolete but morally harmful. One obvious example is the rule or custom of *nhaka* or the inheritance of a wife by her dead husband's brother. While it is also part of this custom that a wife can legitimately refuse to be inherited, her husband's kin are then no longer obliged to support her and are likely to remove her children from her and distribute them among their father's family for their upkeep.

This custom has invidious consequences in contemporary society. The woman may be expected to become the wife of a man she has never seen in order to keep her children. Or she may have to lose her children in order to retain her autonomy. A social rule which in times past ensured that a widow and her children would be cared for by her husband's kin now treats her as a chattel.

When social changes render customs obsolete we would expect the *munhu* to be able to reflect upon and evaluate the worth of such customs, because social rules can never have the permanently binding force of the Moral Law: they are necessarily contingent in character. Some kind of framework, therefore, is required for us to stand back from *tsika* and reflect upon it. Such a framework might be the Kantian Moral Law: 'So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as the principle establishing universal law' (Kant, [1788] 1982, 30).

I have presented the concepts of *tsika* and *hunhu* as if they were clearly distinguishable from one another. In fact, like many moral concepts, there is only a blurred line between them, especially when we consider moral responsibility. Creatures which are not morally responsible, such as animals, can be trained by being beaten, but their behaviour does not elicit considerations of moral worth. It is only a morally responsible

creature which can be praised or blamed for its actions; that is, it is only a *munhu* who is morally autonomous.

But a child can make moral deliberations and perform actions with moral worth and can, therefore, be praised or blamed. A girl, for example, who allows herself to be the object of illegal sexual attentions (and both partners to the sexual act are often considered to have agreed to it, whatever their ages) has not simply failed to demonstrate *tsika* but has behaved like an animal — someone without *hunhu*. In a similar way, a father who praises his daughter for truthfulness is not merely reflecting on the perfection of her training but is pointing out her human virtue. Even young children are expected, therefore, to display their personhood from time to time.

There is no general rule among Shona people as to the circumstances, the degree and the age at which a person may display the qualities of personhood. This should come as no surprise, for the concept of childhood is in all societies riddled with ambiguities and contradictions.

TSIKA: THE FOLK VIEW

In this section I show that there is a wide range of views and evaluations of the concept of *tsika* among Shona-speaking Zimbabweans which I discovered during the course of my investigations and conversations with teachers and parents of primary-school children in different areas of Zimbabwe from 1989. I also show that, in some areas at least, the empirical social and economic foundations supporting *tsika* have been shaken.

Teachers

A number of teachers, but less than half of those I interviewed, thought that children found their Shona lessons boring. Different reasons were given for this. One teacher said that the children knew it all already. Another said that Shona was not taken seriously because Shona was not an examination subject.* Some teachers emphasized that Shona must be taught because children did not learn about their own culture at home. Yet in order to teach 'Shona culture' the teachers themselves have to learn it from books. 'Shona culture' is increasingly becoming a subject whose content is defined by officials in the Ministry of Education and by the teachers and educationalists who prepare books for school use.

Another negative attitude to *tsika* was expressed by a young Grade 4 teacher working in a school in a high-density suburb of Harare. He was sceptical of the value of teaching Shona culture in the modern world. He believed that Shona culture was not 'intellectually stimulating' and,

* It has become an examination subject recently.

therefore, does not lead to personal intellectual development. I asked whether one's personal identity was not to some extent bound up in one's culture. He intimated that he thought this was a foolish notion: it is Zimbabwean (i.e. national), not Shona, identity which must be developed.

Many headmasters told me that they had been trained at mission schools and were practising Christians. One explained that he and his wife, who was the daughter of a minister, were both brought up to regard Shona customs as barbaric. They themselves, therefore, have a poor grasp of Shona culture and have not taught it to their own children, except for formalities like offering guests hot water for washing their hands before giving them tea. It was only recently that he witnessed, for the first time in his life, the traditional burial of a chief.

The decline of traditional culture

This brings us to the thought that the attempt to teach *tsika* takes place, in some areas at least, in the context of great changes in the social, economic and political organization of the countryside as well as the town. The decline of traditional culture, thus conceived, is at least a century old and is accelerating owing to the growth of the population and the displacement of people for economic and other reasons, not least during the years of the *chimurenga* war.

Although space does not permit a detailed description of this decline, a brief description of the lives of some rural parents may indicate a breaking up of the family unit. Only six out of twelve parents whom I interviewed lived with their spouses — of the remainder, four had husbands working 'in town' and two were single parents. Only two households included an older relative, that is, a person able to transmit cultural values to the children. Only two households were helping to care for kin. One man had brought up his own family and was now the guardian of a 14-year-old nephew. Most of the older parents had adult sons and daughters living 'in town' who seldom visited their parents and made only infrequent gestures of help. The single women had been completely abandoned by both their fathers' and their former husbands' kin.

Differentiation is also clearly evident in terms of status and income among these apparently homogeneous individuals. Those women whose husbands work in town often have servants to help on the land and with household chores. The servants may be young Mozambican men, refugees who are housed free and paid about one-third of the official wage. (They usually eat with the household.) Servants are also drawn from the landless youth. Some men work in the area as clerks, barmen, local-authority officials or health workers, and these men live with their wives. The life-style of people in paid employment is dramatically different from that of subsistence farmers since the income of the former may be up to ten times

greater than that of the latter. Even so, a net annual income of \$3 000 (the sum mentioned by one such wage earner) cannot go very far.

Moreover, as a teacher explained to me in one area, the 'community' was split into three different residential areas: the (good) 'traditional' community of the Communal Lands, the (scandalous) 'resettlement' parents; and the families 'on the other side of the river' where the army is being trained and where the women and young girls have fallen prey to the soldiers' attentions resulting in divorces and domestic unhappiness. Other distinctions are made, for example, between local people and the new migrant Mozambican farm labourers or forestry workers. Mozambican families are thought to care less for their children and to be less sophisticated than local people.

We might think that traditional society consists more of a set of practical skills than a form of social organization. Yet none of the parents admitted to having skills in pottery, *gudza*-making, basketry and so on, except one woman who knew how to brew beer for religious festivals. One father was a self-taught carpenter and another older man made money by thatching and making *migoti* and yokes for oxen. All the mothers I spoke to gave their occupation as that of farmer, although one earned her living by professional sex.

Despite its decline, parents and teachers stress, however ambivalently, the importance of Shona custom. One headmaster said that central to Shona culture were religious beliefs and superstitions which, as a scientific socialist, he rejects. Yet he believes that some practices (*roora*, for example) are good. They show the proper respect to one's in-laws and should be promoted. Other practices which cause suffering, like the killing of twins, should be abolished. This headmaster believes that cultural identity is a key to personal identity and to feelings of personal worth. He said emphatically, smiling, 'When I think of myself, and feel good about myself, I am proud of myself as an African man — as a Shona man'. He thumped his chest.

The teachers whom I interviewed interpreted the term *tsika* in different ways. Some thought of it as belief in the *vadzimu*, holding the view that fear of *ngozi* suppresses immorality, murder, seduction and adultery. Others went further, saying that it consisted of the religious rites of passage and spiritual values. One saw it in terms of the social rules of deference, especially in relation to girls and their male kin. A woman infant teacher said that *tsika* consists of polite behaviour and good manners. Another urban woman teacher saw it as learning the names for traditional cooking utensils. A rural headmaster saw it in terms of learning the structure of authority in traditional society. All believed, naturally, that children must receive a moral education. The question is, is this education to be got from *tsika*?

Parents

All parents interviewed agreed that education ought to develop the child into a morally responsible human being as well as to secure for that child some kind of economic future in the world of work. One mother believed that the school can perform both tasks but that the final responsibility lay with the parents. A good home, she said, is as important as a good school and it is part of being a good parent to make sacrifices in order to be able to send one's children to school. It is at this level that the home impinges on the school — providing support, obeying the instructions of the teacher and reinforcing school discipline. But as far as *tsika* is concerned, home and school are equal partners.

All the parents questioned saw education not merely as a route into the world of paid employment but as a route into modernity itself. They did not falter at the thought that this might lead to their children living in cities or even abroad and forming modern social relationships. As a test I asked some parents how they would respond to their children marrying a *murungu* if it meant that their child had to give up Shona customs. Most said they would not regret their daughters' losing touch with the Shona way of life if they were to marry a man who would make them happy.

In this context, the insistence on the importance of *tsika* rings somewhat hollow. A few mothers said that they were teaching their daughters the rudiments of child care and would teach some form of sex education when the children grow older. Some, after specific questioning, said that they were teaching family history. One family at least was teaching Shona to their children so that they would learn the richer, subtler, more poetic and expressive form of the language which is spoken in the countryside. Obedience is seen as an important virtue. Many interviewees emphasized the value of hard work. Only one — the professional sex worker — said that what was important was to develop in the child the attributes of *hunhu*.

TSIKA AND TONGA CHILDREN

The inculcation and dissemination of cultural values and of *tsika* is always considered of primary importance. There is, however, a lack of a clearly agreed application of both terms and *tsika* is not always positively evaluated, even by Shona-speaking people. This section gives an example of a negative evaluation of *tsika*.

Among the schools that I visited were two primary schools in the Tonga-speaking area of northern Matabeleland, staffed by Shona-speaking teachers. The Tonga people are polygamous, matrilineal and virilocal. They were removed from the banks of the Zambezi by the government in the early 1950s prior to the building of Lake Kariba and relocated on a hot

and barren piece of land on the Zambezi Escarpment, overlooking the Lake. Before this period, according to Beach (1980), the Tonga had been subdued on a number of occasions by Shona-speaking peoples who provided them with chiefs and totems and who ultimately came to speak Tonga. Shona hegemony has thus been experienced for centuries over Tongaland but the destruction of the Tonga economy must be attributed to their removal from the Zambezi valley.

I interviewed the headmasters of these schools and report on their perceptions, noting, however, that they were expressing their own views — views which may or may not represent those of the Tonga people themselves. The point is not to explain Tonga culture but how Shona-speaking teachers perceive Tonga behaviour.

Both headmasters told me that women have very low status in this society. Tonga parents are uniformly hostile to schools and to school teachers, none of whom are Tonga-speaking. This hostility manifests itself in the following ways:

- 1) Far from discouraging absenteeism amongst the children, parents actually promote it, especially when children are needed at harvest time.
- 2) Parents do not support teachers or school activities, thus making it difficult for schools to obtain co-operation from the children.
- 3) Parents seem not to understand the value of education and do not appreciate the necessity for regular attendance at school.
- 4) One informant, Mr H., thought that Tonga parents have 'an inferiority complex' and believe that the Shona teachers are 'stuck-up'.
- 5) Parents complain if children are disciplined in any way at school.

There is clearly a lack of communication between the community and the school and this makes teaching difficult. Mr H. has a class of forty Grade 7 children and expects twenty to be absent at any one time. Sometimes a child comes for a few weeks each term, sometimes for one term a year. He says that fewer than half the total cohort of eligible children actually register for school; his school should have 1 000 pupils and four classes per grade, but actually has 660 pupils. Mr H. compared this situation with a Shona-speaking area in the Midlands where parents take an interest in the children's work and will bring the truant child to school to ask the headmaster to beat him.

No books have been written in Tonga and none of the teachers at the schools I visited are Tonga. This means that children coming into school must communicate with their teachers in Shona (a foreign language) until they have learnt English. The Shona-speaking teachers are not motivated

to learn Tonga, partly because of the way they are treated by the community, and partly because they do not intend to stay in the area longer than they can help. Communications with friends and relatives are poor, it is very hot and they receive neither recompense nor support for the inhospitable conditions under which they must teach.

Learning in the Shona language means, according to these teachers, that Tonga children are, linguistically speaking, two years 'behind' their peers in other areas. Mr H. gave his Grade 7 class a Grade 5 textbook to work through as an experiment; few could handle this material competently. The failure of children at school may be another factor accounting for parental hostility to education.

My second informant, Mr M., a gentle and sensitive man who has an Ndebele father and Shona mother, agreed that the community attitude was universally experienced by teachers as hostile. His own view was more subtle. He believed that the apparent discourtesy of the Tonga people was to be explained by the fact that they had different customs from the Shona or Ndebele. He thought it was important to understand the local culture, but hard to do so as, I suppose, there is no one to teach the Shona administrators Tonga *tsika*.

Mr M. said that by using the Shona language as a medium of instruction the school was unconsciously promoting Shona values. The same was true of all primary school textbooks. For example, the curriculum unconsciously and subtly promotes the value of limiting family size and of monogamous sexuality. Discussions on these themes touch a sore spot among the polygamous Tonga who interpret them as personal threats to themselves and their values. He said, with wild exaggeration, that the Tonga were accustomed to taking four wives and that each wife would bear as many as fifteen children. He thought that it was this practice which was partly responsible for the poverty of the people. Yet to condemn large families was to criticize the children's domestic values. Mr M. believed that it was very important, pedagogically, to start from where the children were: but he did not know where they were.

What these interviews draw attention to is the possibility that the school curriculum is biased in favour of what these two teachers saw as Shona *tsika* — albeit in its modified and modernized, urban version. This appears to inflict upon Tonga children — and their parents — the same kind of moral alienation from school as Black — indeed, all non-White children — suffered during the colonial era. It is not just a matter of presenting to children a horizon larger than that of their own daily life experience. The world held up to children as a model in school is a different moral universe from that which they experience at home.

The alienation of the Tonga child is two-fold: it is an alienation from the language of discourse and an alienation from the moral content of

discourse. Mr M. believed that the root of the problem of absenteeism was the way in which the Tonga community has been 'frog-marched' (although from the most generous of motives) into accepting an education which defines them as ineducable and 'primitive' in various subtle ways, many of which may have escaped even such an acute observer as Mr M.

The truth of the above remarks does not depend on whether curriculum bias reflects Shona *tsika* or merely urban values. Any set of practical precepts generates distinct and different moral universes. Any curriculum generated from any one moral universe may be experienced as alienating to a child whose customs differ from the model. If the textbook stereotype is a model of social organization which conflicts with the child's own, or subtly downgrades the value of the rural experience, or presents as desirable models completely beyond the grasp and experience of the child, it may succeed in alienating hundreds of thousands of children whose own life experience does not and cannot conform to the model. Under these circumstances, the practical moral precepts embedded in the teaching of *tsika* may have undesirable consequences.

THE FORMAL CHARACTERISTICS OF *TSIKA*

I have tried to show that *tsika* can be experienced by some children as an alien and perhaps irrelevant moral universe. But is this merely because the content of *tsika* is alienating? We recall that *tsika* is the body of customary knowledge and rules which must be learned and applied, whether the child understands the purpose and point of a rule or not. Reasons are seldom given to the young child to explain why she should, or should not, do something. It may be that underlying this is the thought that to give or ask for reasons is in itself a form of bad manners demonstrating a lack of trust. And *tsika* forms the framework of adult-child relationships, in the classroom as well as outside it. The application of *tsika* is necessarily involved in the teaching of *tsika*.

In the classroom where *tsika* is practised we do not expect, therefore, to find children challenging their teachers or even spontaneously asking questions or initiating discourse. A 'good' child does not question adults but tries to imitate the moral model and learn the moral rules held up to her. The moral framework of *tsika* generates a pattern for the transmission of all knowledge: a body of socially accepted beliefs transmitted intact by adults to unquestioning children. I found that in very few of the classrooms that I visited did children initiate discussion, say that they had a problem, or point out an error which the teacher had made on the blackboard.

But it has long been thought that this model of learning and this concept of knowledge is both inadequate and ineffective. It is difficult for young children to have to play the role of passive recipients of the teacher's knowledge

for long hours at a time, however gifted the teacher; and less able children, as I argue elsewhere, are likely to become profoundly alienated in the process. And it is unlikely that a pupil-teacher relationship based on reverence will be cognitively and morally fruitful for the child, especially if it is combined with corporal punishment.

Morality can be taught, if at all, only within the moral framework from which it emerges. For example, we are unlikely to learn that lying is a moral evil from someone we know to be a liar. In just the same way, the teaching of *tsika* needs to be taught within the framework laid down by custom. The framework of *tsika* provides for social relations where the child learns obediently and without questioning the authority of the adult. The application of *tsika* is thus designed to produce docility and conformity rather than independent thinking and moral autonomy.

This naturally greatly facilitates classroom control, especially when there are large numbers of children in each class and harassed or badly-trained teachers. The wisdom of *tsika* is that it makes provision for those stages of a child's development when he is not capable of making abstract moral judgements, corresponding to the Piagetian Stage Two (Flavell, 1963, 290-7). It also emphasizes the social nature of everyday morality and the desirability of cooperation among people.

But to overemphasize *tsika* in the classroom is to encourage compliance rather than personhood. For how are compliant children to be transformed into autonomous moral beings? *Tsika* is just too successful and too easy a way of handling social interaction: its very success militates against the development of *hunhu* in the child. If the learner is to become autonomous, cracks must appear in the teaching of *tsika* and these cracks must inevitably undermine *tsika* itself.

Although the concepts of *hunhu* and *tsika* are closely related and interwoven in Shona thought, and although they appear to represent the stages in moral growth familiar to students of Piaget, they are actually in conflict with each other. To take seriously the former is to undermine the force of the latter as a form of moral education.

CONCLUSION

No one doubts that children must learn, both at home and at school, to be moral. It may even be the case that learning morality is a necessarily alienating process, for it is only by this process that the child may be alienated from 'natural' desires in the form of the expression of egotistical wants in order to bring her passions under the control of reason. The question is whether *tsika* is a form of education which will lead to the desired goal — moral autonomy. If *tsika* entails the transmission of traditional culture, teachers will increasingly find themselves fighting a losing battle, for there is little meaningful which remains of that culture in this

period of increasingly rapid social change and, perhaps, social disintegration.

In addition, perhaps the teaching of *tsika* should be questioned if the authoritarian traits which are manifested in many different ways in classroom interaction (for example, in the centrally designed curriculum and in the syllabus) are direct products of *tsika* in action. Colleagues at the University of Zimbabwe have noted that even undergraduates present themselves, officially at least, as 'good boys' and 'good girls', that is, people who have not proceeded beyond *tsika* to *hunhu*. The ritualization and bureaucratization of the whole intellectual quest from the postgraduate level downwards may be seen as an over-zealous return to the first stage of traditional morality, without a leap into the reflective and critical autonomy of the second.

This study cannot end without reflecting upon the relevance of the Kantian conception of morality. The utilitarian aim of reproducing a compliant, closely integrated, 'happy' community cannot be the ultimate moral goal of the educator. For just as she is committed, by virtue of the meaning of the concept 'education', to help develop in each individual child cognitive capacities and practical skills, so is the educator committed to guiding the child towards rational moral agency.

For the Kantian, a morality which functions on the level of social utility alone cannot count as a full-blooded ethical system. And, for a Kantian, rationality resides in the very heart of morality: it is not merely an instrument to measure or evaluate empirical judgements about the relations between means and moral ends. Rationality and morality are necessarily directed to the well-being of the individual child, long before considerations of the well-being of the society are taken into account.

Glossary

<i>amai</i>	Mother (Shona).
<i>ambuya</i>	Grandmother, and female relatives of her generation (Shona).
<i>baba</i>	Father (Shona).
<i>bantu</i>	The people (Ndebele).
<i>chimurenga</i>	The war of liberation fought against the White settler regime in 1896/7 and during the 1970s.
<i>dharakubhe</i>	A person who lacks self-respect (Shona).
<i>gudza</i>	An article woven from bark fibre (Shona).
<i>hunhu</i>	The human qualities of moral autonomy (Shona).
<i>migoti</i>	Stirring sticks for cooking sadza or maize-meal (sing. <i>mugoti</i>) (Shona).

<i>munhu</i>	A person (pl. <i>vanhu</i>) (Shona).
<i>muntu</i>	A person (Ndebele).
<i>murungu</i>	White person (Shona).
<i>Mwari</i>	God (Shona).
<i>ngozi</i>	An aggrieved spirit, especially one who seeks revenge by inflicting harm on a living person (Shona).
<i>nhaka</i>	Wife inheritance (Shona).
<i>roora</i>	Bride-price (Shona).
<i>tete</i>	Paternal aunt and, by extension, all women of the father's generation belonging to the same clan. Her special role is to mediate between children and their father when marriages are arranged and in the education of the child.
<i>sekuru</i>	In this context, mother's brother, also responsible for a child's moral education (Shona).
<i>tsika</i>	Knowledge of Shona customs and thus morality (Shona).
<i>uchenjeri</i>	Prudence (Shona).
<i>unaki</i>	Moral goodness (Shona).
<i>vadzimu</i>	Ancestral spirits (sing. <i>mudzimu</i>) (Shona).

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