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EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF NATURE/NURTURE WITHIN THE LITERARY VISION OF ANCIENT NEAR EAST: FOCUS ON KING DAVID'S FAMILY

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Abstract

The nature/nurture controversy started from human inquiry to determine what affects human behaviour. Two questions are raised to this effect; is it genes or the conditions cum environment where they are raised in? However, debate on nature nurture have often taken one side of extreme proportions but recent discussions especially by psychological researchers carried out on correlational twins, family, and adoptive studies have proven that both nature and environmental factors affects human behaviour on equal bases. Also, scholars have engaged on similar inquiry to find out why the children of King David followed in their father's evil behaviour; is it genes or the conditions where they were raised? or the fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy. Another angle to this debate is whether if the redactors envisaged that sin perpetrated be parents could transfer to the offspring. Therefore, the target of this paper is to interrogate the theory of nature/nurture to find out why the children of King David mimicked their father's evil behaviour quiescently using nature/nurture theory and the theory of child development. The paper employed phenomenological research design and descriptive method in its data analysis. The research discovered that King David evil behaviour, the condition that his children were raised in, parental weakness and the theological import of view of David's narrative encapsulated in Nathan's Prophecy all account for the delinquent behaviour of the children of King David.

Keywords: Exploration, Nature/Nurture Theory, Literary Vision, Ancient near East, Family, King David.

Introduction

A quick glance at the books of Samuel will reveal some behavioural pattern such that one would wonder if the redactors envisaged parental weakness and behavioural transfer from parents to offspring. Example of such pattern is found in Eli's family where the Bible blamed the bad behaviour of Eli's children on his inability to restrain them from evil behaviour (See 1 Sam. 3:13). Also, the same Eli played his parental role diligently towards Samuel which

prepared him to become one of the greatest priests. This implies that those who rendered the literary form of Samuel in its synchronic form codified the narratives to implicate that some actions of the parents could instill a particular behavioural outcome in their children. In the case of King David, which is the focus of this paper, David displayed a sequence of evil behaviour which later played out in the life of his children. His sins were adultery עָנָאחִי *yanəʾaḥ* (Holladay, 1988: 224) with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah. Undoubtedly, these collaborated stories of adultery and murder have continued to bewilder intellectual community. Most blurring aspect of the discussion is the reason the children of King David committed the same sin as their father and why the sacred book of Christian told the story with confidence. Majority believe that the reason is because they learnt evil from their father (Apple 2006, White 1945, Harmon, 1945). Apparently, the sins of rape and fratricide meant that the children of King David have completed the sins of which their father is guilty.

Some others believe that what transpired in the house of David is the fruition purpose of Nathan's prophecy. To these people, the evidence is found in the promise that God made to David which writes that "the sword (sin) would never depart from his house" (Henry 2014). Scholars have also approached the topic from the foci of the school of thought that redacted the books. According to them, Human kingship is not permitted. It stands in opposition to Moses, Israel, and the Lord. Their reason for this is because of the flaws that characterise human kingship. Again, if the kings become evil, their children may follow in their evil footsteps (Dietrich 1972, Kyle & Carter 1984, Owens 2010).

Based on these scholarly views, it is clear that parental action cum environment have the probability to influence the behavioural outcome of children but to what extent is still a matter of debate which is one of the targets of this paper. Interestingly, western philosophers such as Plato, Hobbes, and Descartes carried out a study on Darwin's theory of evolution and heredity and have made similar inquiry to find out if genes (nature) affect human behaviour. According to them, knowledge is inborn in humans and other animals; therefore, behaviour is inborn and could be transferred to children. Similarly, Kant believed that there has to be an existing innate structure in the mind that was necessary for the attainment of knowledge. According to this theory, it suggests that nature determines certain abilities and capabilities in human being as well as animals. Apparently, Gaton concluded that this is the reason for social stratification of society because children of judges often ended up as judges. Nature according to Tawak (2015) refers to biological factors which include genetic, hormonal, and neurological factors, and evolutionary adaptation. Another theory that complements nature which is important to this research is nurture. Nurture is usually used to refer to the circumstances outside of the person including family, and opportunities for intellectual stimulation (Gross, 2010) in (Tawak, 2015). According to Aristotle, knowledge comes from one's experiences in the world. Therefore, nurture refers to all the experiences of a child acquired amid interactions with the stimulus in the environment. Latest inquiry into what affects human behaviour shows inclination towards agreement that both nature and nurture are the major variables that determine a child's behaviour especially at later age. Professor Rene Dubos who advanced this reconciliation notes that behaviour is a result of the combination of inherited mechanism and mechanisms modified by experience (Tawak, 2015).

Therefore, this paper sought to reconcile the divergent scholarly debate on the cause of delinquent behaviour of King David's children by studying the narrative in line with nature nurture principles. Also, this paper will seek to reconcile the fact that redactors of the books of Samuel anticipated the theory of nature nurture and inbuilt it in their artistic narrative. This will be realized when a synthetic approach is engaged between David/children narrative and nature/nurture theory.

The methodology applied in this research is phenomenological research design. Exegetical approach was used to study the textual reference to this study while the descriptive method was used to analysis the theory of nature nurture and David's/children's narrative. The paper made use of secondary source of data collection and did not involve clinical studies or oral interview.

Literature Review and the Theological point of view of 2 Samuel

The book of Samuel is very important because it sheds light on the historical events of Kingship in Israel. It tells the story of "the shift in Israel's leadership from prophet-judges of Samuel's type to Kings, and especially dynastic Kings(Alter and Kermode 1987). "The author(s) set(s) out to tell us how Israel came to have a monarchy, an institution which for good and ill was to be part of the people's life from the time of Saul to the time the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 587 B.C" (Ackroyd 1971). "It tells how Samuel became a leader in Israel, probably about 1050 B.C., and was responsible for Saul becoming the first King of Israel" (Ackroyd 1971). Again, "it contains that part of the history of Israel which describes the foundation of the state" (Wilhelm 1960).

Precisely, it portrays the strengths and weaknesses of these human Kings and serves as a warning to the Israelites in a period of transition from Judges to Kingship. Interestingly, this is the goal of the Deuteronomistic school of thought that redacted the book. According to them, the central message is for those who witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem, hence any King who must rule His people must maintain the centrality of worship at Jerusalem initiated by David and realized by Solomon. This school of thought designed the message in the form of vicissitude and suspicion to achieve their aim. Their major target is to throw up the various weaknesses characteristic of the major characters, Saul and David, and their stories told to warn the people about the inherent danger of choosing an earthly king against the Almighty Lord (Guthrie, 1990). The provident Yahweh is rejected by His own people and the book of 2 Samuel brings to fore the human strength and weaknesses in the life of Samuel, King David, and King Solomon as a warning to his chosen nation Israel as they prepare to rule themselves. The books' fundamental theological position is that if the king is faithful to God, the nation thrives economically, socially, and militarily. "If the king is faithless, national catastrophe ensues" (Baker, 2014: 10).

This is remarkably the point of contrast between these work and other scholars who have commented on the major theme of the books of Samuel. According to them, the theology of the books of Samuel is the promise of Davidic dynasty. The authors of this paper are of the opinion that the book of Samuel is not just all about Davidic dynasty, hence the plethora of narratives on the weaknesses and strengths that characterize human Kingship. Taking this further, David's adulterous act with Beersheba, the murder of Uriah which later played out in the life of his children and the failures of Saul to uphold monotheism are all indicators of

the point made above. In essence, the books of Samuel portray the theme of Davidic dynasty, inter alia, the weaknesses and failures that characterise human Kingship which their children can either emulate or inherit hence the exigency of this paper.

Evil behavioural paradigm in Samuel's Narrative

A study of the books of Samuel reveals a formula of children unable to replace the positions held by their parents as a result of their waywardness. In most instances, they could not replicate the good deeds of their fathers. They ended up instead in the opposite direction. This is also the view of Fox (2019) when he notes that "Children who grew up to be men and who, regardless of genuine examples set by their fathers of living a righteous life and of being faithful and just, willfully chose to go in the opposite direction" (Par, 4). Simultaneously, the children of Eli, Samuel and King David all turned out to follow in the footsteps of evil. The case of Eli and Samuel are different because they exhibited good character worthy of emulation. Unfortunately, their children became worthless and followed an evil direction. The children of King David followed the evil footsteps of their father quiescently because they repeated all the sins that their father committed. This heightens the volume of the debate of this paper that the Deuteronomistic historians who redacted the book envisaged the possibility that parental behaviour have the possibility to repeat itself in the life of their children hence the exigency of narratives implicating behaviour shared between parents and their offspring. This is because the tendency of having evil children will derail the divine will of God and truncate His governance. To be more precise, human kingship is prone to birthing evil in the context of Samuel because the children of kings may compromise the divine rulership which will in turn pervert God's justice. Therefore, the evil behaviour of the children of Eli, Samuel and King David helps to explain why human kingship is problematic.

The Theory of Genetic Trait, Environmental factor and Physical Development of Children and Parental Role

The question of how human beings develop has been on for centuries with so many theories accounting for the different ways humans behave. To do this, theories on physical development of man that account for human behaviours are reviewed. To this end, we turn to physical growth theory formulated by Arnold Gesell. According to this theory:

> Growth and development in individuals proceed in an orderly and predictable pattern. They involve stages that are highly similar if not identical from one individual to another. Gesell also noted that development is controlled more by genetic factors than by environmental factors. As such, an individual's development follows a genetic blueprint wired at conception (Ngwoke and Eze 2010).

This theory postulates that human behaviour follows a timetable genetically imputed at conception. It gives account of the divergent stages in human growth and development; for instance, a child will have to sit before crawling, before walking and so on. This theory gives the assumption that environment contributes little to the change's characteristic of human development. In this line of thought, the changes that characterize human development owe their ontology to genetic traits children inherited from their parents at conception. Miller surmises this thus: "we used to think our fate was in our stars. Now we know, in large measure, our fate is in our genes" (Miller, 1998).

The environmental influence which is not captured by this theory is complemented by the environmentalist theory which was popularized by J B Watson's Classical Conditioning Theory. This theory was discovered in 1920s by Ivan Pavlov, a Russian physiologist. According to this theory, Watson surmises that with the manipulation of the environment he can bring up children in different fields (Eze, 2002). Quoting him, he said:

> give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I will guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select-doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant, chief, and yes, even beggar-man and thief-regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors (Watso 1924).

These two theories assume that genetic traits as well as environmental factors are the major determinants to what a child will be.

Therefore, parents have a role to play in what children will be in their later life since a child at birth is helpless and depends on their parents. This is because mothering should be a continuation of the pre-natal state as the child still needs to be carried about at intervals until he can move and co-ordinate his own body (Mendinnus, and Johnson 1976). Also, Parents are responsible for the manipulation of stimulus in the environment to enable the child to correlate activities and develop.

Nature /Nurture Theory

Nature/Nurture theory is very important in investigating behavioural variance in humans because, "without nature and nurture, we would all be the same, and have the same experiences" (Nikehasani 2018) This assertion is very relevant in this study because it will shed light on the reason why the major flaws of King David later played out in the life of his children. "Nature vs. Nurture states that feelings, ideas, and human behavior are innate or learned" (Nikehasani 2018). This is wildly believed by many. About this view, Ahmed explains that:

> Some philosophers such as Plato and Descartes suggested that certain things are inborn, or that they occur naturally regardless of environmental influences. Nativists take the position that all or most of our behaviors and characteristics are the result of inheritance. Advocates of this point of view believe that humans are nothing but the result of evolution. Genetic traits handed down from parents influence the individual differences that make each person unique (Ahmed 2015).

Nature relates to the behaviour that is characteristic of genetic makeup or heredity."Nature is what we think of as pre-wiring and is influenced by genetic inheritance and other biological factors"(Saul 2018). Therefore, nature as a theory of human behavior describes the personality of an individual, aggression behaviour and intelligence" (Nikehasani 2018). Nurture refers to all the experiences that a child has after birth. These experiences come as a result of influences from family members, school, and environment to mention but a few. Proponents of the role of nurture in shaping human behaviour include a great thinker and Philosophers like John Locke(Albert 1986). The proposition that was put forward by John Locke is that the human mind starts as a blank slate on which the experiences within the environment develop attitudes, perceptions and thus behaviour

It "describes individuals as products of surroundings, socialization, peer pressure, values, and labour.

The major contesting ground about nature nurture debate is whether genetic makeup of a child has any influence on the child's later developmental strides and if yes, to what extent? The other school of thought expatiate the extent of the contribution of the environmental stimuli to the child's overall character. This debate has been on for ages, but more sophisticated research has shown that a robust correlation between the two is what produces the character differences in human being. For instance, it is difficult to say with precision the extent of the influence of any of the theories to later behaviour of a child. In fact, scientists assert that behaviours are determined 100% by biology and 100% by environment; they cannot be separated (Miller 2011). Hence Gottlieb explains that "gene-environment coactions are the rule in developmental investigations"(Gottlieb 2003). This research will engage the rule of relationship between nature and nurture to assert the fact that King David's children repeated the same sins like him, and that it is not a coincidence but a probability that he transferred the traits to them.

Synthetic Approach to David/Children Narrative and Nature/Nurture Theory

The plethora of narrative showing a replete of the same behaviour between a father and children within the theological framework of the books of Samuel has affinity with the question raised by nature/nurture theory. This is because they both explain that behaviour has the probability of being transferred to the offspring. For instance, from the narratives of Samuel and those of nature/nurture, one can easily glean a pattern: children repeating what their parents had done. Interestingly, this pattern of recycled evil which strengthens the metaphor of sin flowing through the blood corroborates the major tenets of nature nurture propositions. To illustrate this, David was guilty of sin of adultery and murder and his children followed in that line when Amnon raped Tamar and Absalom murdered Amnon thereby forming a cycle of evil in the house of David. This has guided Howard's observation that "David's inability to discipline his own sons was vastly weakened by his own wrongdoing" (Howard 2004). Howard's observation brings out the importance of parent's personal discipline and their parenting role. Empirical research shows that parents who are guilty of sin often transmit the same to their children. For instance, McCord notes that "criminal and antisocial parents tend to have delinquent and antisocial children" (McCord 1977). Furthermore, "having a convicted father, mother, brother, or sister predicted a boy's own conviction, and all four relatives were independently important as predictors" (Farrington el.tal 1996). According to Farrington, though the conviction of other relatives like brothers and sisters play a part in determining one's conviction, none predicts a boy's own conviction like the conviction of the father. He illustrates that 63 percent of boys with convicted fathers were themselves convicted (Farrington et al, 1996). The point made so far implies that since the conviction of father could predict a child's own conviction, one could then say that the transfer of the same behaviour whether good or bad throws up the relationship between repeated behaviour found in Samuel's narrative and nature/nurture theory. Further instance show that "arrests of fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, grandfathers, and grandmothers all predicted the boy's own delinquency but the most important relative was the father; arrests of the father predicted the boy's delinquency independently of all other arrested relatives"(Farrington el.tal 2001). Therefore, the children

of David followed in their father's sinful path, and their father being guilty of similar sins was unable to chastise his children.

Also, a cursory glance at the text and the theory of nature/nurture reveals some affinity between them. Part of that affinity is the reality of sin enervating the moral vigour of parents to chastise and discipline their children when these parents themselves are guilty or have been guilty of the same sin. For instance, King David lost control of his family and was unable to discipline them because he was guilty of sin himself. Evidently, King David was very successful until he committed the sin of adultery and murder. Thereafter, he lost control of his children and family because of his own sin. Harmon has rightly observed that "David's inability to discipline his own sons was vastly weakened by his own wrongdoing" (Harmon 1939). Also, David's lackadaisical attention towards his duty as a father could be explained from Nathan's prophecy. Having heard from Nathan that the faithful God will punish him for his sin, David believed that the cause of his children's misbehaviour was the fruition of God's promise. Toeing this line of thought, Eze notes that:

> In verse 21, it is explained that since David committed the same sin of adultery and murder against Beersheba and Uriah respectively he could no longer punish Amnon nor Absalom for their rape and murder *(*2 Samuel 12:11-12). It is probably that the sin of David is flowing through his blood as Prophet Nathan predicted that God would raise trouble within David's house (Eze, 2017).

King David saw what was happening in his house as a retribution for his own sin that was beyond his power and control; and so, he kept quiet. A related scenario is observed in the family of Eli. Eli's children were scoundrels. Eli could only advise them but failed to discipline them because it was God's will to punish the house of Eli. Therefore, Eli was restrained from his parental role because he saw what was playing out in the life of his children as God's divine will. Furthermore, because he saw himself as God's anointed, he paid more attention to piousness rather than performing his role as an earthly father. This made Soggin suggest that David's failure as a father is painted from the Deuteronomistic point of view. According to him, David was appointed by God and so neglected earthly things for the service of God (Soggin 1977). Again, he was too loving and lenient and always shirked his fatherly role. McCarter and Kyle noted that "David was, if anything, too lenient and loving as a father" (Kyle 1984).

Based on the points made above, it is clear that King David failed to train his children hence they became delinquent. Lack of parental discipline has been identified as a critical factor in a child's misbehaviour. According to Sani, Senior Special Adviser to the President Muhammad Buhari on women affairs and Administration, parental failure leads to delinquent behaviour in children. She avers that provocative dressing which leads to rape is worn at home in the presence of the parents without any caution. She opines that children who indulge in ritualism, cultism, rape, yahoo/internet related crimes bring their fortunes at home to their parents without sanction. She concluded that parenting is one of the ways to correct delinquent behaviours among children (Sani 2020). Supporting this view, Otumba, Director General National Council for Arts and Culture (N. C. A. C), notes that parental failure and social media are some of the causes of social vices in Nigeria. He suggests that adverts that show provocative pictures should be sanctioned by the government as well as some entertainment business such as *BB9JA (*Otumba, 2020).

Conclusion

The sins of King David were adultery with Bathsheba and the murder. Unfortunately, these sins became a mark against King David which Israel must live with. It is proven that sin is inimical to human success and has the tendency to recycle within a particular family. Admirably, this is the propositions of nature and nurture in this research.

Added to this is that David's greatness did not reflect in the life of his children. Amnon committed the sin of rape against his half-sister Tamar and Absalom murdered Amnon to avenge the violation of his sister Tamar. Interestingly, this repeated case of evil cycle in the family of David has been a long scholarly debate with the causes receiving the most attention. So many scholars have attributed the reason to the fact that David's guilt is the reason he could not discipline his own children. Evidently, parents who are convicted have the greatest probability of their children being convicted too. This is because they cannot give what they don't have. Suffice this to say that they have lost the tooting to discipline their children by the virtue of the fact that they will see such act as normative.

Peer group is at the center of this discourse. Jonadab's involvement brings out the negative contribution of peer group factor in child's developmental strides. The peer group influence signifies nurture in this study. Therefore, this study argues that nature/nurture suppositions reflect in David and his children narrative.

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