

'Who Are We to Judge?': Pathologies of Moral Judgement

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Abstract

Moral judgement plays a paramount role in society. But the moral drift that typically characterizes contemporary life has marginalized the function and legitimacy of moral judgement in the public sphere. There emerge in society certain pathological attitudes that afflict moral judgement. This study profiles the pathologies that afflict moral judgement. The profile is based on the interviews with respondents who experienced making moral judgements and being morally judged in public as well as conversations with social science and philosophy experts. The profile, which is consistent with the phenomenon of moral decline, consists of ten pathologies which misuse, distort and caricature moral judgment as acts of hypocrisy, interference, judgementalism, negativism, personal attack, moral perfectionism and superiority, sentimentalism and ambiguity and profanity. Those who exercise moral judgement are stereotyped as hypocrites, judgmental, negative, hostile, destructively critical, arrogant, self-righteous, and intolerant. The fear of being negatively stereotyped creates a culture of silence and moral indifference. Furthermore, these pathologies are used as a strategy to deny or escape moral responsibility; justify acts and structures of immorality; and marginalize the moral foundations of social life. The extreme repercussion of these pathologies is the anathematization of moral judgement so that it becomes a social pariah. As moral judgement becomes an outcast, morality is devalued in the public sphere. Hence, moral judgement must be severed from these pathologies in order to recover and retain its paramount role in society.

Keywords: Moral drift, Moral judgement, Moral responsibility, Pathologies

Introduction

Moral judgement is a paramount part of moral discourse and praxis. Understood as the evaluation of situations, policies, actions and their consequences, motives, and character as good or bad, right or wrong, beneficial or harmful, virtuous or vicious, moral judgement enables members of society to attribute praise, blame, and moral responsibility. Moral judgement sustains the moral borders and boundaries in society (Furedi, 2021). However, moral judgement can also be a source of disagreements at once theoretical and practical.

Moral judgements are informed by competing moral worldviews and they mirror their differences. As an apparatus of moral evaluation, moral judgement is under duress as it is caught in the crossfire of such conflicting moral worldviews as *moral realism*, the view that posits the existence of objective and universal moral norms (Fischer & Fuchs, 2015); *moral relativism* the belief teaches that morality is dependent upon culture and society (Lukes, 2008); *moral subjectivism* which holds that morality is a matter of individual discretion (Baofu, 2011); *moral skepticism* the doctrine that maintains moral knowledge and beliefs as impossible and empirically unjustifiable (Machuca, 2017); *moral nihilism* the philosophy that denies the existence of morality (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2007); and *moral pluralism* the perspective that recognizes the plurality of moral values and norms and therefore the plurality of accounts (Hinman, 2012). Differences in moral judgements also outline the opposing theoretical orientations that variously regard morality as either duty, divine command, consequences of action, or character. These fundamental and theoretically generated disagreements are inevitable, but they affirm the importance and legitimacy of moral judgement rather than repudiate it.

Extremely disturbing is the emergence of certain ways of thinking that marginalizes the role of moral judgement. Interrogating the problem of identity, Furedi (2021) points to the devaluation of moral judgement as a symptom of society's diminished ability to uphold its moral borders and boundaries. The problem of identity is closely associated with estrangement from moral judgement. This estrangement ramifies into society's moral blindness which can be traced to the failure to make public judgement in the face of a radical evil. The state of human life in modernity is described as floating, rootless, and wasted. Moral vacuum is the price paid for abandoning the morals of solidarity in favor of technological progress that is predominantly governed by commercial logic. Here morality is not only marginalized but is also severed from the evaluation of social issues thereby institutionalizing the culture of moral indifference (Bauman & Donskis, 2013; Juul, 2013; Furedi, 2021).

Society and culture play a significant role in the formation of moral judgement. Turiel (2012) argued that social structure and cultural practices influence how individuals make moral judgements. In their study on the sociocultural dimensions of moral judgement, Arutyunova et al. (2016) noted that Western and Russian cultures account for a utilitarian ethical orientation in moral judgement among men.

In *Foundations of Morality*, Kupperman (2020) observes the decline in the practice of moral judgement in the nineteenth and twentieth century Western society. In those periods those who made moral judgements were frequently frowned upon as moralistic. The cultural attitude with which Western society perceived moral judgement resulted not only in reduced frequency of moral judgements but also in the diminution of morality. Knox (2015) accentuated the phenomenon of moral drift in the twenty-first century Western culture due to the moral dissipation affecting its basic social institutions. In Africa, Samson and Allida (2018) traced the causes of moral decadence among Ugandan high school students to parental inadequacy, social media and the internet technology. In Nigeria, Njoku (2016) reported that educators blamed materialism, moral permissiveness, poor parental and religious formation, broken families, and mass media as culprits of moral decadence that is pervasive among secondary school students.

In Asia, moral degradation is attributed to the influx of foreign pop culture (Otmazgin & Ben-Ari, 2013). Foreign media, especially Western media, poses an enormous threat of Asian morals and values. Investigating the decline of morality among the young people in the Philippines, Cordero (2013) pointed to inadequate family involvement in the life of the teenagers, social pressure, and mass media as agents of moral decline.

The phenomenon of moral dissipation across the world is linked to the marginalization of moral judgement. Since this phenomenon threatens to undermine the ordering elements of society, it is imperative to identify and examine the pathologies that afflict moral judgement.

Methodology

In this paper, I profile the pathologies of moral judgement. This profile is based on my experiences, observations, and personal interviews and conversations with respondents and experts. The respondents include individuals who experienced making and expressing moral judgements and being morally judged in public. The conversations with experts, which include academics from the fields of philosophy and social sciences, focused on their perspectives of moral judgement as well as their thoughts on the respondents' views of moral judgement.

The interviews with respondents revolved around questions concerning their feelings, beliefs, and thoughts about their experience of making moral judgement on others as well as their feelings, beliefs, and thoughts about their experience of being at the receiving end of moral judgement in public. Questions about the repercussions of making moral judgements were also asked. Aside from the interviews with respondents and conversations with experts, I also tapped on my experiences and observations about moral judgement in society including the information that I obtained from social media, newspapers, radio, and television.

Throughout the study I was in conversation with four experts from the fields of social sciences and philosophy. The respondents totaled around fifty, but these are reduced to twenty due to redundancy of viewpoints. In the description of the pathologies, the respondents are symbolized as R1, R2, R3, to R20. The respondents' views on moral judgement are profiled to facilitate the identification of attitudes that deemed pathological. The critical perusal of the respondents' thoughts and feelings about moral judgement is done by bracketing the attitudes that are consistent with the concept of moral judgement in morality from the attitudes that are pathological of moral judgement. Attitudes are deemed pathological when they tend to characterize moral judgement outside its proper function in morality.

Pathologies of Moral Judgement

Based on the thoughts, beliefs, and feelings of the respondents about moral judgement, my own experiences and observations in society, and conversations with academics in the field of social sciences and philosophy, a profile consisting of ten pathologies of moral judgement was produced. The respondents' variegated views on moral judgement disclose typologies of pathological attitudes that are adversative to the concept of moral judgement in society. The profile comprises of ten different pathologies. Excerpts from respondents are included in the presentation in order to provide concrete examples of the pathologies.

Pathology 1. Moral judgement as ad hominem. This pathology is twofold. First, moral judgement is construed as a personal attack against their person or character by those to whom judgement is applied. Second, moral judgement is used as an apparatus of attack against the person, character, and reputation of others by those who make the judgement. The view that moral judgement is a form of attack against reputation and person is held by those who have been the object of moral judgement.

R8 said she felt insulted by some of the neighbors who made comments about the misbehavior of her children: "I was badly offended by what my neighbors said about me and my children. They said my children are as undisciplined as their parents." While R8 admitted that some of her children did misbehave, she maintained that being judged is an assault against her and her family. R15, R20, and R12 related different experiences of being morally judged but they shared a similar sentiment with R8 about judgement being an attack against their person. R12, in particular, does not have any issue with people making moral judgements as long as the facts are correct: "I was accused of being a 'chismosa' (gossip) liar for allegedly for spreading bad rumors about our classmates in school." R15 and R20 being judged is painful because even if the persons are guilty or innocent, their reputations are being ruined. However, R20 confessed that she had falsely confronted a relative in public whom she thought was responsible for feeding her parents with false information about her. All three respondents,

except R12, believe that moral judgement is an assault against the person of those who are judged regardless of guilt or innocence. R20 agreed that making false moral judgements can ruin people's dignity and reputation, but she also reasoned out that when she committed a false moral judgement it was not her intention to malign a person.

Based on their experiences, the respondents feel, think, and believe that moral judgement is practically an ad hominem. This view is commonly observed in society. On the one hand, if moral judgement is truthful (logically and factually) and proper (ethically), construing it as an attack against one's person is actually an attack against moral judgement itself. On the other hand, moral judgement is misused and abused if it is used to attack individuals. When moral judgement is misconstrued or misused it becomes pathological.

Pathology 2. Moral judgement as Tu Quoque (You too). This pathology is closely related to the logical fallacy Tu quoque (You too). In logic, Tu quoque is a fallacy that points out the inconsistency between the opponent's argument and behavior. In morality, it is aptly called moral hypocrisy. The individual to whom moral judgement is applied repudiates such judgement not because it is untruthful, but chiefly because the person who makes the moral judgement is also guilty of the same moral fault or of any other moral fault in general.

R19 and R6 expressed their displeasure at being judged by individuals whom they claim to be hypocrites because they believe that they are far worse. When pressed about what particular thing about them that people hypocritically judge, they were reluctant to make specific examples. Instead, R19 explained that "If you think you, I am what you see and judge me to be, be sure that you are not guilty of the same otherwise you have to be careful about judging other people." R1 intimated that he is reluctant to pass judgement because he also has similar weaknesses. "In my mind, I say that this person is like that or this. That is really wrong. But when I look at myself, and if I say that this person is doing what is wrong, I am actually judging myself. There is no difference between me and the person I judge. We are all at fault." R1 said he hates people who judge others for they are hypocrites. He believes that only hypocrites judge people. He admires people who just keep quiet and do not judge others.

R19, R6, and R1 all believed that people should not be judging other people not only because it is "nakakahiya" (shameful), but it is also prohibited in the Bible. In their minds, people should be ashamed for judging others. Hypocrisy is a character of a bad person. Only God can judge what is truly in the "kalooban" (interiority) of the person.

The respondents view moral judgement as a moral taboo and an act of hypocrisy. This attitude rejects moral judgement not because it is truthful or that they are innocent, but mainly because such judgement comes from a fellow human being. Only judgement that comes from God is valid, outside God it is plain hypocrisy.

Pathology 3. Who are you to judge me? On its face value, this pathology appears to raise two questions, namely, the question about one's right to judge and one's social standing. "Who are you to judge me?" implies three things. Firstly, it suggests that only those who are morally and socially (status) superior may judge. Secondly, it insinuates that the one making the moral judgment is not in any way morally and socially superior, hence one does not have the right. And thirdly, regardless of moral and social status, no one has the right to make moral judgement.

"What is their right to judge me?" quipped R16, his voice betrayed what appears to be a strong emotion of anger, when asked if he had experienced being judged. R16 narrated that some family members and neighbors judging him is nothing new. He is used to it already. While he admitted that he is not as good and successful as his siblings, he still believed that people do not have the right to judge others. R18 felt that people judge others because they think they are better. "My weakness or faults do not give other people the right to judge me. Just because they are educated and do well in life they think they have the right to say bad things me?" R18 took a more cerebral view on moral judgement saying, "People will judge you either because they think you are worse or they are just better. But who are we to say that some are better or worse? What universal and objective standard there is that grounds our moral judgement?"

R16 and R18 are in agreement with R19, R1, and R6 in their belief that only God has the authority to judge. This view of moral judgement it is based on certain questionable assumptions and conditions for making moral judgement. It also removes the right to judge from human beings.

Pathology 4. Judge me not for you know me not. This particular conception of moral judgement stipulates personal knowledge and close relationship as requirements for making moral judgement. It implies that moral judgement can only be done by people who are close to the individuals to whom judgement is applied. R9 viewed moral judgement as improper and injurious if the one making it does not know the whole truth about the person and the situation that person is in. "We cannot just hastily judge anyone just because he/she did something wrong fully knowing his/her background, what he/she is going through, etc." R14 decried how she had been unfairly judged by people who do not actually know her nor are known to her. She confided, "I had to deactivate my Facebook account because I was anxious and depressed. People just said all sorts of things about me in the social media. It was toxic." R9, R14, and R7 felt that society, especially the virtual world, is so unforgiving yet so ignorant because it judges just anyone, whereas those who personally know us or are close to us would be kind in their judgement. They did, however, admit that they had judged people even if they do not really personally know them. R7 reasoned out that when public figures do wrong things, like politicians and government officials who abuse their positions, the public should express their anger.

This view of moral judgement transports the focus of moral judgement from its factual and normative truth to the supposed requisite of personal knowledge. The reasoning behind is that those who “personally know” and are close to us, such as our friends and relatives, will be understanding and forgiving. By setting the bar of moral judgement only to those who are closely related to us pathologizes moral judgement.

Pathology 5. Moral judgement as interference (It’s none of your business). This attitude is pathological in two ways. First, moral judgement is framed as an unwelcome interference with the affairs of others. Second, some individuals interfere with others under the guise of making moral judgement. R3, R8, and R12 considered moral judgement as prying into the lives of other people. Moral judgement is a nuisance in life. Meddling with the affairs of others is socially undesirable. People are better let alone than bothered to do their own business. When asked how she felt when being judged by other people, R3 exclaimed, “This is my life, I live the way I want to live and I do what I want to do.” She looked at people who make comments, especially moral comments, about what other people do as poisonous. R12 described people who judge others as “restless,” “They might just be bored and have nothing to do in their lives; so they would poke their nose into people’s affairs.” Asked if he had ever judged anyone, R8 answered, “Yes, many times, but I do not do it seriously and I do not mean to interfere with other people. I just share my thoughts about other people with my friends.”

R3, R8, and R12 all agreed that it is alright to judge but we have to keep our judgements with our circle of friends, and leave other people alone. Asked if, they are willing to do something in order to stop a wrong act or harm, they answered in the affirmative. However, as R3 explained, doing something to prevent a wrong or harm is different from interfering with the business of others.

The view that frames moral judgement as mere prying into the affairs of other people or using it as an instrument of obtrusion recalls the paramount role of moral judgement in society.

Pathology 6. Moral judgement as judgementalism. This pathology revokes the difference between moral judgement and judgementalism. The two are substantially and psychologically far apart. Moral judgement is an act of moral evaluation. In contrast, judgementalism is an act of passing judgement in the spirit of arrogance and contempt, or the vicious tendency to pass judgement on others for its own sake. The former is a legitimate function of morality, while the former is unacceptable and hostile. Dissolving this difference in favor of judgementalism effectively desecrates the integrity of moral judgement thereby reducing it to the practice of hostility and arrogance.

The view that moral judgement is judgementalism corresponds to the thoughts and feelings of R2, R10, and R5. For them, people who are judgemental are obsessed with criticizing others in order to embarrass them. R10 narrated that he knows someone in the workplace who tends to see things as either right or wrong

only. “When she speaks, everything that comes out of her mouth is judgement and criticism. She just cannot seem to say something positive.” R5 assumed a more subdued tone saying that “even if we see some people do something bad or wrong, we just have to be compassionate and understanding rather than being judgemental. A friendly smile can do wonders to others, while judgement can destroy relationships.” R2 referred to people who make moral judgement as insensitive and aggressive. “Judging others is a show of aggression and hostility. Instead of aggression, we have to show empathy and be sensitive to the feelings of others.” Asked whether moral judgement can be done without being judgemental, R10, R5 and R2 conceded that it is possible, but explained that most people would tend to see moral judgement as unpleasant and hostile.

Pathology 7. Moral judgement as perfectionism and superiority. (Are you perfect? Are you better than I?) This view implies that moral judgement is legitimate only if the individual who makes the judgement is morally perfect or at least morally superior to the one to whom judgement is applied. There are two subtle implications to this. First, no one is morally perfect, therefore no one should make moral judgements. Second, no one is morally superior to another, because in one way or another one suffers from certain moral failings. Therefore no one should not make moral judgements. This attitude seeks to eliminate the possibility of moral judgement.

R7 shared that he does make comments about people but sometime feels awkward because he might just be more imperfect than them. “I experience conflict inside me because there are times that I feel very strongly against the wrongs committed by other people, but I am also ashamed of my own mistakes even if they are not as bad.” R13 expressed a combative attitude about moral judgements. He criticized people who engage in moral judgements claiming not one of them is perfect, some even are worse than most. “You see these people rant on social media with their platitudes criticizing others of moral corruption without ever recognizing their own putrid morality. The more imperfect and worse they are, they more they judge others.” R13 dismissed people who have the propensity to judge as morally pathetic. R20 chose a religious approach to moral judgement. He maintained that instead of “judging others, we must instead invite them to repent and realize their mistakes. Judgment antagonizes people, but preaching the gospel of love sanctifies our neighbor.” R7, R 13, and R 20 affirmed that people who are prone to making moral judgements exhibit an air of self-righteous.

Pathology 8. Moral judgement as negativism (You’re too negative). This attitude assumes that moral judgment in all its forms is negative. Further, it regards moral judgement as nothing but an exercise in destructive criticism. This ignores the fact that moral judgement can also be an act of praise and approbation. By portraying moral judgement as negative and destructive, this attitude not only degrades moral judgement itself but also disparages the person who makes the moral judgement. Negative and destructively critical people are perceived to be hostile and undesirable. They are often avoided and isolated. Under the threat of being perceived hostile

and undesirable, avoided, and isolated, people tend to suppress and cancel moral judgement. As a consequence, moral judgement is practically eliminated from the public sphere.

This view is exactly what R9, R15, R20, and R19 believed moral judgement is all about. R9 and R15 averred that people who are inclined to judge others exude negative vibes. "I am not any bit bothered by what negative people say about me. Either they are envious of my success or they are just too miserable," narrated R9. R20 did not deny her share of moral imperfections but she was convinced that "negative people could not see the positive in us; they always see the dark side, even the not so dark part of our lives becomes negative to them." R15 saw in people who judge others the need to make other feel bad about themselves. "People who judge other people, I think, are so full of hate and misery that the only way to relieve them of this burden is to judge other people." R19 surmised that people who make moral judgements do not necessarily see others as negative, but they do judge them nevertheless "to project their own negativity to others." The respondents' view of moral judgement appears to be extremely negative.

Pathology 9. Moral judgement as profanity. When moral judgement is couched in profane language or used as a medium for throwing expletives at people it loses its power of moral suasion. Public moral outrage and condemnation of a grave evil presupposes moral judgement, but when moral outrage and condemnation is laced with profanity, moral judgement is disparaged and pathologized.

R11 and R25 shared that they were victims of their teacher's profanity seasoned tirade when they failed to submit their academic report on time. Despite profusely apologizing for their negligence, they were humiliated in front of their classmates. They could not believe their teacher could hurl such expletives their own parents would not even dare say. "We were young then and carefree just like most of our classmates were. We did not mind receiving as a stern reprimand even at the presence of others, but hurtful language hurled against us really traumatized us."

The culture of trash in society is legitimized in public by influential people and powerful institutions. The sports and entertainment world tolerates, if not glorifies, trash talking. When foul language interfere with moral judgement, the latter is corrupted.

Pathology 10. Moral judgement via seems/feels like. The expression "it seems/feels like" reeks of ambiguity and sentimentalism. This attitude is widespread in society. When moral judgement is qualified by "seems/feels like" it becomes nothing less than an expression of preference and uncertainty. In this context, what may be truly good or evil, right or wrong becomes rather somewhat good or evil, right and wrong. If reduced to the level of "seems/feels like," moral judgement then ceases to be a practical domain of normative determination.

R4 abashedly admitted that she often uses the expressions “seems likes” and “feels like” even in things that are certain. When asked if she used those expression in making moral judgements, she replied, “I do, like I would say ‘cutting classes seems or feels like’ wrong.” She explained though that despite those expressions, she really meant that cutting classes was certainly wrong. R17 intimated that he is aware what those expressions mean but justified his use of them by saying that there are many things he is not sure of. “There are times that we think and feel strongly about some acts as clearly wrong, but for others they may not be wrong at all. So, I use those expressions out of respect to others.” These attitudes are pathological as they tend to modify moral judgements so much so that they are no longer uttered with a force of certitude.

Perusing the Pathologies of Moral Judgement

The perusal of the pathologies that afflict moral judgement is intended to clarify the paramount role of moral judgement in moral living and to recover it from the negative biases and adversative attitudes that cause its disrepute. It is important to unravel the premises, presumptions, and implications of these pathologies in order to determine their plausibility. Indeed these pathologies provoke questions concerning their factual, logical, and moral basis.

These pathologies share common features: they *mischaracterize*, *misuse*, and *distort* moral judgement. Behind these pathologies, two plausible motives and intentions can be drawn. Firstly, these pathologies are intended to *repudiate*, *eliminate*, and *discredit* the role of moral judgement. Secondly, these pathologies serve as a *strategy to deny and escape moral responsibility*. The ultimate ramification is the crippling of morality, because when moral judgement is sabotaged, society’s ability to assign praise and blame is likewise crippled. The eradication of the power to demand moral responsibility is tantamount to the annihilation of morality. That is why these attitudes are deeply pathological.

The attitudes and acts that instantaneously caricature moral judgement as nothing but an exercise in *judgementalism* and *negativism*, *interference*, or *personal attack*, while completely dismissing the important question concerning the judgement’s factual, logical, and moral propriety, is deeply pathological. Instead of challenging its truthfulness and propriety on appropriate and relevant grounds, moral judgement is distorted. The view that regards moral judgement as a form of negativism is in itself a form of negativism. To label a moral judgement as judgementalism is also a form of judgementalism. To frame moral judgement as a personal attack is an attack against the moral judgement. These pathological attitudes seek to cast moral judgement in a bad light, to discredit it, and ultimately eliminate the imperative for moral responsibility.

“*Who are you to judge me?*” and “*Judge me not, for you know me not*” are pathologies that seek to impose false requisites for moral judgement. The question on the right to judge is more rhetorical and literal. But be that as it may, humans are moral beings, endowed with the capacity to make moral judgement. The right to make moral judgement emanates from human nature. To demand that only those who are morally and socially superior or those who have personal knowledge and close ties with the person implicated in moral judgement have the right to make judge is baseless and unsound. These attitudes only seek to distort moral judgement by setting conditions that are completely irrelevant to the logical, factual, and normative grounds of moral judgement. These pathological attitudes are a scheme to shift the focus, away from moral judgement and the responsibility it entails, to those who make the moral judgement.

The pathology that frames moral *judgement as an act of hypocrisy* is a bit complicated. From the logical viewpoint, this manner of thinking is clearly incorrect because the truth of a moral judgement is totally irrelevant to the behavior or attitude of the one who makes the judgement. From the moral vantage point, however, the issue is difficult to navigate. As Christians respondents resort to the Biblical exhortation not to judge (Mt. 7: 1) and the denunciation of hypocrisy (Mt. 7: 3-5, Holy Bible, NABRE, 2011) appears to support the contention that no one should really make any moral judgement. Yet, elsewhere in the same Bible are several instances of moral judgement (Jer. 5: 4; Prov. 26:4-5; 1 Jn. 1:4; Lk. 12:57; 1 Cor.6:9-10, 1Tim 1: 8-11 Holy Bible, NABRE, 2011). This seeming contradiction can be resolved by recognizing that what the Bible proscribes is only hypocritical and arrogant moral judgement. This means that moral judgement, understood as a way of determining the moral quality of acts, motives, and character, is precluded from the Biblical prohibition.

It must be noted though that framing moral judgement as an act of hypocrisy, either because the person who makes the moral judgement is guilty of the same fault or is in some ways guilty of some moral faults, is wrong. Certainly, moral infallibility is not a prerequisite for moral judgement. As moral beings, moral judgement is inevitable. People, even those who claim that morality is a myth, make moral judgments all the time.

Moral perfectionism and superiority is a pathology based on the belief that moral judgement is an exclusive privilege of those who are morally perfect or superior. But there is another catch to this type of reasoning: firstly, no one is actually morally perfect; and secondly, no one is morally superior to anyone because everyone falls short before the tribunal of morality. From these, the sweeping conclusion follow suit: No one can judge anyone. This view glosses over the fact that moral differences are exist and they are significant. While it is true that all human beings are morally flawed, it is false to say that no one is morally superior. Moral living is cast in a moral structure. Moral hierarchy exists within that moral structure. Some people demonstrate sterling virtues in their lives, while others wallow in vices. Some give witness to the truth of ethical living, while others give witness

to moral depravity. Indeed, when it comes to morality and virtue, some people are better than others.

Moral hierarchy is clearly demonstrated in the lives of great world leaders. As a leader, the Philippine President Ramon S. Magsaysay, known as the “People’s President” and after whom the *Ramon Magsaysay Award*, Asia’s version of the Nobel Prize, is named, is undoubtedly morally superior to dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos. In like manner, the great South African hero, Mandela (1994), is unquestionably morally superior to Joseph Stalin. No human beings are morally perfect, but some human beings are just morally hideous.

Moral judgement loses its moral force when laced with *profanity*. This is an abuse and misuse of moral judgement. At its core, this pathology shares the same defect with the view that appropriates moral judgement as an apparatus of personal attack. In the face of a grave evil committed against humanity, public moral outrage and protest can easily lead to condemnation couched profane language. This blurs the line between moral judgment and profanity, and renders the former pathological.

The “*seems/feels like*” attitude is widespread in society. This attitude gravely impairs moral judgement’s determinative and normative power. It promotes moral ambiguity (seems like) and reduces moral judgement to a matter of sentimental preference (feels like). Ambiguous and sentimentalistic moral judgements only work in favor of the diminution of morality. When what is wrong or evil is degraded to “it seems/feels” wrong or evil, morality not only becomes uncertain, but its power to prescribe and proscribe is also diminished.

The experts and I agreed that these pathological attitudes threaten not only the function of moral judgement in society, but also the moral foundations of society. These attitudes typify the phenomenon of moral decline that characterize contemporary societies. It is plausible to think of these pathologies as being precipitated by competing and conflicting moral worldviews and postulates. Certainly, the relativist and subjectivist ethical orientations, which bind morality to culture and personal discretion, can produce certain attitudes that tend to marginalize the function of moral judgement in the public sphere and diminish it into some form of arbitrary pronouncements. Relativist and subjectivist ethical perspectives of morality can actually problematize moral judgement particularly in a pluralist culture and society.

Moral skepticism, the view that nothing is morally certain and justifiable, is substantially aligned attitudes that seek to adulterate moral judgements with ambiguities. The pathological attitude of “Judge me not for you know me not” that peddles the idea that no one fully knows the individual’s situation, and therefore moral judgement should be avoided, reeks of moral skepticism. Moral nihilism, the most radical objection to morality, supports the pathological attitudes that reject the validity and legitimacy of moral judgements. The attitude that repudiates the exercise and legitimacy of moral judgement for practical reasons that tend to support the eradication of morality from the public sphere is substantially consistent with moral nihilism. Lastly, the belief that

moral judgement is a form of intolerance in view of the fact that individuals approach moral issues and problems in manifold, and even conflicting ways, can be due to the influence of moral pluralism.

It must be noted that while these pathologies occur in the province of moral praxis, not in the level of theory, the fact remains that these ethical worldviews and postulates do exert influence on feelings, thoughts, beliefs and attitudes in the practical domain. The experts and I are in somewhat contentious consensus that moral judgements, regardless of their factual, logical, and normative soundness are bound to provoke negative reactions from those to whom judgement is applied. The social science experts insisted, and I agree, that regardless of its validity and propriety, moral judgement is not limited to normative determination of acts, events, or character, but it is also a form of positive and negative sanction. Since moral judgements essentially help maintain moral borders and boundaries in society, people to whom moral judgement is applied, typically and expectedly react negatively to a negative form of moral judgement and react positively to an affirmative form of moral judgement.

All the experts and I affirmed that these pathologies are in fact pathologies arising from negative forms of moral judgement, that is, when moral judgement is exercised to determine that a certain event, act, or character is evil, wrong, or blameworthy. Moreover, majority of the experts, and including myself, identified four plausible motives behind the pathological attitudes toward moral judgement. Firstly, the distortion, mischaracterization, and rejection of moral judgement might just be a strategy to deny and escape moral responsibility. Secondly, moral judgement is weaponized for social and political purposes. Thirdly, moral judgement is pathologized in order to justify acts and structures of immorality. Fourthly, moral judgement is repudiated in order to disrupt moral borders and boundaries in society, and therefore, destroy the normative foundations of social life.

Summary of Findings

The pathologies profiled in this study reveal attitudes that are adversative to moral judgement. Moral judgement is abused, misused, distorted, and caricatured as nothing but an exercise in hypocrisy, interference, judgementalism, negativism, personal attack, moral perfectionism and superiority, sentimentalism and ambiguity and profanity.

Table 1 Pathologies of moral judgement

Moral Judgements	Pathologies
<i>Ad hominem</i>	Moral judgement as personal attack
<i>Tu Quoque</i> (You too)	Moral judgement as hypocrisy
Who are you to judge me?	No one has the right to judge
Judge me not for you know me not	Only family members and friends can judge
Interference	Moral judgement as intrusion
Judgementalism	Arrogant and contemptuous judgement
Perfectionism and superiority	Only the morally perfect and superior can judge
Negativism	Moral judgement as an exercise in negativity
Profanity	Moral judgement couched in profane language
Seems/feels like	Moral judgement as sentimentalism and ambiguity

These pathological attitudes tend to repudiate and discredit the role of moral judgement in society. Framed within these pathologies, those who make moral judgements are negatively stereotyped as hypocrites, judgemental, negative, hostile, destructively critical, arrogant, self-righteous, and intolerant. The fear of being negatively stereotyped leads to a culture of silence and moral indifference.

All ten pathologies are shown to be adversative reactions to a negative form of moral judgement, that is, moral judgement that assigns blame on certain event, act, or character. Since moral judgement that assigns blame or moral responsibility also comes as a form of sanction, adversative reactions on the part of those to whom judgement is applied is expected. Not one respondent expresses a pathological view on a positive form of moral judgement, that is, judgement that assigns praise.

Moreover, the competing and conflicting moral worldviews and normative theoretical orientations may have precipitated the pathologies of moral judgement. Moral worldviews such as relativism, subjectivism, skepticism, and nihilism can challenge moral judgement as arbitrary, discretionary, uncertain, or even completely unjustified. A pluralist perspective may portray moral judgement as a form of intolerance owing to the fact that there are plural ways to making moral judgements, not one of them is entirely superior.

Behind the pathologies of moral judgement, experts identify four plausible motives, namely, the distortion of moral judgment as a strategy to deny and escape moral responsibility; the weaponization of moral judgement for social and political ends; the pathologization of moral judgement to justify acts and structures of immorality; and the repudiation of moral judgement to undermine the normative dimensions of social life. The extreme

repercussion of these pathologies is the anathematization of moral judgement so that it becomes a social pariah. As moral judgement is treated an outcast, morality is devalued in the public sphere. The marginalization of moral judgement results in the erosion of moral borders and boundaries which in turn cripples society's normative power to sustain the imperatives of moral responsibility.

Moral judgement is a normative tool for the attribution of praise and blame onto an event, act, or character. Moral judgement have to be severed from the pathologies in order to recover and restore its paramount role in society. By clarifying its role and exercising it in accord with its proper role in society, moral judgement becomes a potent tool for maintaining the moral borders and boundaries of society.

Conclusion

The thoughts and feelings of individuals who experienced moral judgement, either as one who makes the moral judgement or one to whom moral judgement is applied, disclose certain pathological attitudes that are not only adversative to moral judgement but also deleterious to the normative aspect of social life. It is curious that these pathological attitudes are directed only to forms of moral judgement that demands moral responsibility (blameworthiness). The same pathologies do not apply to forms of moral judgement that convey approval (praiseworthiness). Moral judgement is not, after all, rejected in its entirety. The power of approbation is left intact, while power of disapprobation is brutalized by distortion and mischaracterization. One of the important implications to this is the aversion to moral responsibility.

While the respondents' views toward moral judgement do not warrant a generalization that most members of society are averse to moral responsibility, it can be reasonably argued that these pathological attitudes, nonetheless, represent a qualitatively significant social tendency that poses serious dangers to the normative and ordering elements of social life. This position is consistent with the phenomenon of moral drift obtaining across many societies in the world. The decline of morality is contingent to the loss of moral responsibility in the public sphere.

The pathologization of moral judgement and its far-reaching consequences to morality and social institutions have to be studied from the sociological and psychological points of view in order to unravel the social and psychological structures that account for these pathologies.

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