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THE CHARACTEROLOGY OF STEPAN BALEY SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL COMMENTS

Abstract

This article aims at identifying the relevance of character research, conducted by Stepan Baley, a representative of the Ukrainian branch of the Lviv-Warsaw School. To achieve this, the author first analyzes the key points of Baley's characterology, and then demonstrates its potential from the perspective of Twardowski's philosophical tradition and within the ethical debate on the empirical approach to character. The author concludes that it is impossible, according to Baley, to obtain accurate and complete knowledge of character, as well as it is impossible to educate a person in a certain way.

Keywords: Stepan Baley, Lviv-Warsaw School, Kazimierz Twardowski, character, empirical research, psychology of morality, situationism

The empirical approach to character has been a matter of intense debate in ethics. Some researchers pay special attention to empirical facts in assessing moral behavior; others consider them only auxiliary or even marginal. Stepan Baley (1885-1952), a representative of the Ukrainian branch of the Lviv-Warsaw School (1895-1939), tried to avoid extremes in solving this problem. According to him, character cannot be the subject of exact scientific research; however, case studies that investigate human behavior in a specific situation are useful for science. In particular, they are important for the theory of moral education. Baley discusses this issue in such works as:

- "The Normal Character," *Rocznik Psychiatryczny* (1933) [in Polish];
- *The Characterology and Typology of Children and Youth*, Warszawa 1933 [in Polish];

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- “Research into the Social Behavior of Preschoolers,” *Przedszkole* (1934-1935) [in Polish (2016b)];
- *The Psychology of Character*, Lviv 1935 [in Ukrainian (2002)];
- “Research on the Ethics and Aesthetics of Preschool Children,” *Polskie Archiwum Psychologii* (1935-1936) [in Polish (2016a)].

Baley’s work on the empirical approach to character has not yet been the subject of a separate study. In this paper, I will highlight Baley’s characterology within the modern context. To do this, I will first analyze the key points of Baley’s characterology, and then evaluate their potential from the perspective of Twardowski’s psychological and ethical thought and from the context of the ethical debate on the empirical approach to character.

1. BALEY’S CHARACTEROLOGY

Baley stressed that the contemporary definitions of character were unclear and imprecise with him believing that this was the result of the misuse of the concept of character.

Baley described character:

- through the concept of the will; to this end, he distinguishes between the concepts of character and temperament: he associates temperament with the senses, and character — with the will;

- through the concept of behavior; since there is a close connection between character and the will, the close connection between the will and human behavior is also obvious;

- as genuine, character meets certain fixed and unchanging principles; since it allows us to predict how a person will act in a certain situation;

- as moral, character meets certain principles of ethics; Baley interprets such character as a certain value, a certain ideal.

Baley identified character with personality as well. In this sense, a certain person’s character is what characterizes him or her, what determines his or her identity (Baley 1933b: 9-11).

Baley investigated whether character, as a general disposition, could be the subject of exact scientific research (Baley 1933a: 81). To find the solution to this problem, he applied an analogy. Considering the contemporary studies, Baley argues that a person has neither good nor bad memory. She has

different types of memories (sensory, short-term, long-term, etc.). One kind of memory might be better, and another might be worse. Similarly, a person has different types of attention (involuntary and voluntary, sustained, selective, alternating, divided, etc.). One kind of attention might be better, while another might be worse (Baley 1933a: 81-82).

Similar to the scientific research of that time, Baley considered it also unlikely that it was possible to examine character as a single disposition. He regarded such expressions as “strong character” or “weak character,” or “good character” or “bad character” as shallow and inaccurate. He did not describe character as a certain entity but tried to analyze its particular manifestations (Baley 1933a: 85). He considered it possible only to analyze human actions in a certain situation: as she/he would act — conscientiously or not, honestly or not. In other words, according to Baley, “one can ascertain the presence or absence of any character trait only in a certain situation” (Baley 2002: 429). Baley considered such research necessary for science, for it helps to evaluate human behavior in a particular context (Baley 1933a: 86).

Baley was especially interested in the issue of human development and character formation. To examine separate manifestations of preschoolers’ character in certain situations, he conducted a series of characterological experiments at the Institute of Psychology, University of Warsaw. The conditions of the experiments included identifying the degree to which preschoolers could overcome being selfish in favor of others and exhibit the maturity to cooperate, including the ability to take initiative (Baley: 2016a). There were six experiments. Two peers participated in each experiment. In the first three experiments, the children could behave as they liked: selfishly or altruistically. In the next three experiments, the children could demonstrate the ability to cooperate.

In the first experiment, the experimenter gave two dolls to one child (if the experimental couple were girls) or two toy cars (if the experimental couple were boys). In the case of the dolls, one doll was bigger and well dressed, while the other one was smaller and poorly dressed. In the case of the cars, there was a similar difference in quality between them. The child who received the toys was instructed to keep one, at his or her own discretion, for herself/himself and give the other toy to the other child. In this case, the child could act “selfishly” — keep the better toy and give the worse one to the other child, or “altruistically” — do the opposite.

The second experiment was similar to the first. A child received two balls, one of which was colorful, and the other was not. The child had to keep one ball for play and give the other ball to the other child.

In the third experiment, one child had to share three chocolates with the other child.

The fourth experiment used a device similar to a cash register, where children could throw coins of various sizes. The cash register had two opposite holes of different sizes. Two children were seated in front of the cash register, and it was then suggested that they throw the coins in the nearest hole that would correspond to their size. The holes of the cash register were covered with a board that had only one hole. To throw the coins in the cash register, the child had to turn the board accordingly. Obviously, only one child could do this. In order to throw the coins into the cash register, she/he had to organize her/his work properly. In this case, she/he could demonstrate “willingness to cooperate” and “mutual flexibility based on equality” as well as the desire for initiative or the tendency to rivalry or flexibility.

In the fifth experiment, the two children were shown a house made of blocks. Once they had seen it, they were asked to build the same house together.

In the sixth experiment, the experimenter gave a book to the two children. They were asked to examine it together and say if they had ever seen the same book in their kindergarten (Baley 2016b: 250-251).

Baley’s study of selfishness and altruism in preschoolers showed that they could behave selfishly in the first experiment. That happened when a doll or toy car seemed nicer to them. However, in the next two experiments, they could behave altruistically, explaining that by the need to give accommodate others. Children could also do the opposite: if in the first test they behaved altruistically, then they thought that in the second or third experiment they had the right to be selfish. The results of the first experiment showed that 50% of the participants acted selfishly as they kept the better toy. From this, Baley reached an interesting conclusion: the number of selfish deeds gradually changed from experiment to experiment. This meant that it was wrong to definitively evaluate the child based solely on the results of the first experiment, since some children sought to correct and balance their actions in the second or third experiment. As for the motivation for fair sharing, Baley observed this phenomenon much more often in older children (Baley 2016b: 252-255).

Baley’s research into cooperation between preschool children indicates that, under experimental conditions, four-year-olds behave differently than six-year-olds. All the six-year-old children understood the instructions, that they should build one house. They either built it together, or one child looked on passively as the other completed the task. In any case, the six-year-olds did not try to build two houses. In contrast, the four-year-olds took some of the blocks and tried to build a separate house on their own. The four-year-old children behaved as if they had not yet understood what the word “together”

meant. It meant for them: both at the same time. A comparison of the behavior of four- and six-year-olds in this experiment led Baley to conclude that attending a kindergarten had contributed to the children's collaborative skills development, although these skills were still rather shallow. The children tried to work together, but still without a clear understanding: one child might start building with blocks alone, and the other child added his or her own blocks. In the last three experiments, Baley also observed children taking the initiative and he attributed this to their character. This initiative was of a social nature and similar to what could be defined as the capacity for leadership. In the experiment with the cash register, initiative taking could be observed when one child first turned the board over to his or her side, and then either moved it to the other child's side, so that they could also throw the coin in the cash register, or by simply saying: "Now you throw." In the experiment with the book, initiative taking could be seen when the child who took the book turned the pages while allowing the other child to look at the pictures, and when he or she used the facial expressions of the other child as a guide as to when to turn to the next page (Baley 2016b: 255-259).

According to Baley, the empirical facts of character research can show teachers which of their work on character formation is useless, since it does not correspond to the nature of ethical cognition, and which of their work needs to be reconsidered due to some features of character development. He believed that teachers should have a clear and precise understanding of the concept of character and be able to distinguish it from other concepts; they study character not in general terms, but instead focus only on some of its traits, by considering their accidental manifestations; and by remembering that the stage of individual development is connected to the formation of specific character traits. Therefore, they should not force the formation of certain character traits formally or verbally, just as they should not provide their students with ready-made rules or ideals, since children need to independently reach their own understanding of particular situations. Being opposed to coercion in moral education, Baley suggested developing ethical motives, feelings, and aspirations, arranging situations for the implementation of specific character traits, and encouraging self-cognition and self-criticism. He stressed that personality is not only the product of the environment but is also affected by the conscious aspirations of the individual (Baley 2002: 432-434). To demonstrate the problematic nature of pedagogical efforts to form moral character, Baley gives the example of the experimental verification of the impact of "moral education" by Hugh Hartshorne and Mark A. May:

Two identical groups of students were tested for deception, and the results were recorded. After that, special lectures on conscience were held daily in one group for three

weeks. In these lectures, stories on honest behavior based on *The Book of Conscience* were read and discussed in class. After three weeks of education, the two groups were re-examined using deception tests. A comparison of the results in both groups before and after moral education revealed that all the moral study, conducted by the verbal method, had not significantly reduced the cases of deception. (Baley 2002: vol. 1, 432)

2. THE CHARACTEROLOGY OF BALEY AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL THOUGHTS OF TWARDOWSKI

There is clear evidence that Kazimierz Twardowski's psychological thought influenced the development of Baley's characterology. This is demonstrated by the following examples:

1) A DISTINCTION BETWEEN FEELINGS AND ACTS OF THE WILL

Twardowski: "Now, as before, these two groups need to be regarded as two fundamentally distinct types of mental phenomena" (Twardowski 1999b: 66).

Baley: "Referring to the difference between character and temperament, although many psychologists attribute both feelings and the will to both temperament and character, in temperament they analyze more the disposition of feelings, and in character — the disposition of the will" (Baley 1933b: 9-10).

2) ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE CONNECTION BETWEEN WILL AND BEHAVIOR

Twardowski: "The proper subject of ethical evaluation is not intention, but whether good (permanent direction of the will) or bad character is manifested in behavior" (Twardowski 2013a: vol. 1, 339).

Baley: "a person's will is manifested in their actions and, therefore, it is not so much the decisions that are important to society as actions themselves, so it is not surprising that human behavior is often considered to be a mark of the person's real character" (Baley 1933b: 10).

3) DEFINITION OF CHARACTER AS GENUINE ONE

Twardowski: "When, for example, we talk about someone who has formed beliefs, we also attribute to them the formed predisposition to make judgments. In the dispositional sense, we also use the word 'persuasion' when we talk

about unbreakable, sustainable beliefs, like in other cases we attribute to someone unbreakable will, a constancy that is the predisposition to make certain decisions. Again, this dispositional meaning of such words as ‘persuasion,’ ‘reasoning,’ ‘understanding,’ etc. is most clearly expressed in statements about beliefs, understanding, etc. as something continuous” (Twardowski 1999a: 19).

Baley: “In fact, not every form of human behavior deserves to be called character . . . genuine character is evidenced by such behavior that conforms to certain fixed, unchanging principles, which can predict how a person will act in a particular situation” (Baley 1933b: 10).

4) DEFINITION OF CHARACTER AS MORAL

Twardowski: “Influenced by education, a person’s aspirations and decision-making must acquire a stable direction towards what is ethically or morally good; moral character is that man seeks and is able, obviously within their means, to do what is morally good” (Twardowski 1901: 209).

Baley: “Stability in behavior can be assessed positively as opposed to constant variability. The coherence between the principles of behavior and the requirement of morality is especially valued. Thus, clear character can be defined as moral character” (Baley 1933b: 10-11).

Although Twardowski worked in the field of descriptive psychology, he linked its development with experimental research. In 1907, thanks to his efforts, the first psychological laboratory was opened in Lviv (Rzepa 1997: 10). Baley tackled the same ethical problems as did Twardowski, but he tried to solve them through empirical investigation rather than by methods of philosophy. This is Baley’s contribution to the development of Twardowski’s ethical thought.

Twardowski was interested in whether everyone who seeks his own pleasure deserves to be called an egoist (Twardowski 2014a). He answered this question in the negative. The only person who he described as an egoist is the kind of person who seeks satisfaction for himself at the expense of another person. In his characterological studies of preschool children, Baley asked a similar question: could a child be considered an egoist if they took a better toy instead of a worse one during the first experiment? He believed this was not enough, because in the second and third experiments some of the children tried to compensate for their behavior. In addition to the paucity of empirical data regarding selfishness in preschoolers, Baley could not call the children because some of them tried to explain their behavior. The significance of such

a study is to identify the course of moral development of pre-schoolers from egoism to altruism. The study demonstrates what the child has already acquired in their development, and what he or she has yet to acquire. Therefore, children should not be forced to do what they are not yet ready for:

Is it true that everybody who seeks his own satisfaction or avoids his own suffering deserves to be called an egoist? Can we call a person who wishes to be free from a toothache or one who lights a cigar exclusively for his own pleasure an egoist? We know very well that such behavior lacks the characteristics of egoism; more is needed in order to brand certain behavior as egoistic. After all, we do not speak of egoism in the context of someone's own exclusive pleasure or distress, but only where one's own pleasure or distress is connected to someone else's pleasure or distress. We call the kind of person who seeks satisfaction for himself, regardless of whether this personal satisfaction is at the expense of another person's distress or not, an egoist; someone who seeks his own satisfaction but disregards the fact that someone else's displeasure is the condition for achieving his own satisfaction is an egoist. (Twardowski 2014a: 324)

Baley: "Our research has demonstrated that a significant percentage of older preschoolers are not only being selfish, but even frankly confess it. These children, when they were asked by the experimenter, answered without hesitation that they gave some items to the other child because they were worse, and kept other ones to themselves because they considered them better. However, does this mean that kindergartens should work hard to eradicate this egoism and instill altruistic principles in children? . . . isn't it better to allow children to linger for a while on their selfish attitude, which over time may disappear as they grow up as members of a community" (Baley 2016b: vol. 2, 261);

"Subsequent experiments, which appeal to the same ethical disposition, show that the older preschool children tend to compensate in some cases for their egoistic behavior in the first test with their behavior in the next attempts" (Baley 2016a: vol. 2, 298).

Twardowski (2013b: vol. 1, 406) suggested that the development of theory of moral education should be based on ethics. He believed that just as the purpose of learning is to shape the mind, so the purpose of education is to shape the will. According to him, the aim of moral education is character formation and the development of social virtues. Twardowski tried to establish in the theory of moral education the idea that it is impossible to provide students with universal recipes for their moral life. Baley drew on Twardowski's theoretical ideas. He also emphasized the need to give a rationale for moral education. His experimental research helps us to understand that moral norms and principles cannot be imposed to on a child from above. It is only

possible to arrange a situation that elicits understanding. The following quotes clearly confirm this:

motives need to be created and pupils need to be encouraged to make resolutions. Religious motives, such as the fear of punishment or that our will is against God's will, play a crucial role. However, it is not recommended to build education upon religious principles alone. . . . That is why there is the need to provide other sorts of motives of appropriate resolutions, which may come from patriotism, the understanding of one's own business, or noble ambition. (Twardowski 2014b: 128)

Baley: "Strengthening the will excessively cannot be achieved through formal formation, and therefore, for instance, by encouraging a person to make heroic decisions against any motives; however, one can achieve it through the germination of the strongest motives in his or her soul, which in this case will lead them to a decision in the direction that corresponds to the principles of ethics" (Baley 1933b: 30).

3. THE CHARACTEROLOGY OF BALEY AND THE DEBATE IN ETHICS ON AN EMPIRICAL APPROACH TO CHARACTER

Empirical research into moral behavior has provoked a bitter confrontation in ethics. Walter Mischel has called this confrontation "a debate between man and situation," since scholars, when estimating the moral behavior of a person, contrast the person's character traits with the features of a situation in which the person finds themselves (Mischel 2009: 283). In these debates, supporters of the empirical approach to character raise doubts about the traditional conceptions of character and ethics. In their opinion, the conception of character, presupposed by virtue ethics, is empirically inadequate (Doris, Stich 2005: 118). John Doris questions such definitions in the language of good character as "steady," "dependable," "steadfast," "unwavering," "unflinching," and of bad character such as "weak," "fickle," "disloyal," "faithless," "irresolute," since they interpret character as something more than a circumstance, they interpret character as fate (Doris 2002: 2).

Criticism of the traditional concept of character is also related to the fundamental attribution error in social psychology, which occurs when that situational causes are underestimated and personal causes are overestimated in the interpretation of moral behavior. Gilbert Harman argues that we will make the error of fundamental attribution if we explain an action by focusing entirely on the features of an agent's character and overlooking the relevance of the subtle aspects of the agent's perceived situation (Harman 2009: 238).

Such an approach to moral behavior that exists only in certain social contexts is known in ethics as *situationism*. The fact that situationism explains the moral behavior of a man by situational factors, rather than by making assumptions about their character traits, obviously has similarities with moral relativism (Harman 1996). At the same time, situationism leads to skepticism about the existence of character traits. According to Harman, the results of social psychology do not demonstrate the absence of character traits but question their existence (Harman 2000). And if there is no such thing as character, then there is no need to form it. Therefore, he suggests paying less attention to moral education and character formation, and more to the arrangement of social institutions in such a way as to induce people not to get into situations in which they will act badly. He also suggests focusing less on ideas about good and bad character traits and paying more attention to reflecting on good and bad deeds (Harman 2009: 241).

Situationists are convinced that ethics will become more scientific if it is informed by the moral psychology. Instead of simple messages about character, ethics will be employed to compare them with systematic observations of behavior and interpersonal perception. In this way, ethics will remove the need to use intuitive statements (Doris 2002: 9).

Like the situationists, Baley believed that empirical research into the psychology of morality was important to science. However, he considered it unlikely that an accurate and comprehensive empirical study of character as a single disposition would be possible. Therefore, like Doris, Baley rejects traditional evaluations of character as good or bad, strong or weak. Instead, he suggests that empirical research should focus on certain manifestations of character, through the examining of human behavior in a particular situation. In this respect, his thinking is similar to Harman's. However, while for Harman the shift from character reasoning to thinking about actions is the result of skepticism about the existence of character in general, for Baley, these considerations are clearly the reason for a clear use of concepts in science and a moderate evaluation of human moral behavior. In this, Baley is probably following Aristotle, who emphasized the dependence of character on deeds and maintained that a general theory of moral conduct and expediency could not be given a precise formulation. And if this is true of ethics in general, then a theoretical description of particular cases of conduct must be even more inaccurate (Aristotle 1934: 1104a). This opinion is also shared by Nasfika Athanassoulis (2000), who is wary of making hasty assumptions about the existence of certain character traits, based on behavioral data. Similar to Baley, Athanassoulis believes that empirical research into moral behavior gives access only to its external manifestations, and cannot explain character traits.

Unlike the situationists, Baley believed that the fact that character has only situational manifestations does not entail the claim that there is no need to form it. Through his empirical research into the psychology of morality, Baley demonstrated the need to develop a theory of moral education based on scientific knowledge about ethical cognition and the laws of its development. After all, despite the fact that the purpose of moral education is to develop good character, in the early 20th century psychologists and educators did not have accurate knowledge about how character is formed. He considered this research useful for the monitoring of the development of moral character. Athanassoulis confirms this opinion, as according to him, the image of the moral development of virtues is the image of gradual development, which fails in the face of extraordinary difficulties (Athanassoulis 2000). Baley stressed the importance of the absence of external coercion in this process. In this regard, he probably followed Kant, who defined character as an essential sign of a good will and considered it to be a part of a person's inner value. The philosopher attributed the highest value to will in itself, regardless of its ability to achieve any goals. Kant called will the practical mind due to its ability to choose only what the mind recognizes as good, regardless of predisposition. Such a will, which the mind alone cannot determine, was defined by him as coercion. Kant argued that man exists neither as a goal in itself, nor just as a means for any application by a will. The motivation for an act of moral value is not fear, but only respect for the law (Kant 2012). Obviously, through his empirical research, Baley aimed to establish in the theory of moral education the idea that the efforts of the educator should only target the students' autonomous opinions. In fact, numerous critical papers deal with how the situationists ignore this issue of the practical mind (see, for example, Kamtekar 2004, Kauppinen 2013).

In my opinion, Baley's distinction between will and coercion in education also warns us of the danger of Anton Makarenko's collective pedagogy, whose implementation, according to Volodymyr Salii, inevitably leads to an imbalance between individualist and collectivist principles. And, finally, it justifies any coercion and violence by the state (Salii 2021: 136). Baley's characterology might be useful to those contemporary educators who are trying to resist Makarenko's paradoxical slogan "Through the collective, in the collective, for the collective!" (Chutorański 2017). After all, coercion in moral education can follow not only from the educator's actions, but also from the actions of a collective.

CONCLUSION

Baley's characterology states that it is possible to empirically study human actions in a certain situation. Such an empirical approach rejects ethical reflections on bad or good character in favor of reflections on bad or good deeds. Twardowski's ethical research and his interest in experimental psychology might have encouraged Baley to conduct empirical research into the psychology of morality. Baley's characterology offers ethics a path of scientific development which is free from the extremes of relativism and skepticism. In addition, it enriches ethics with a knowledge of moral character development and the peculiarities of its formation. Through his empirical research, Baley aims to demonstrate that it is impossible to obtain an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of human character, just as it is impossible to educate a person according to a particular example.

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