

IMMANENT JUSTICE AND MAGIC IN TONDO

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ABSTRACT. In 1968, students of nine public high schools located in Tondo, Manila, completed questionnaires in which they reacted to two stories. These stories were designed to allow for reactions revealing belief in immanent justice and in the magical efficacy of prayer, respectively. In his analysis the author investigates possible relations between these attitudes and respondent's age, sex, intelligence, and year in high school. Findings are compared with those of other studies on the same topics.

The data analyzed in this paper were gathered in 1968 in the course of a more inclusive piece of research, namely, a sociopsychological study of the students of nine public high schools in Tondo, Manila. The objective of the research was to find out the students' attitude toward religious values. However, the scope of this paper is limited to two topics: first, immanent justice; and, second, magic as integrated in efficacious prayer. Each will be discussed in turn, following some remarks on the methodology employed.

Methodology

Brief answers to only two questions on method are given here. The first concerns how the data were obtained — the techniques employed to get the information we sought. The second is about the independent variables we hypothesized would show some relation to the incidence of immanent justice and magic-in-prayer.

Collection of data. For the gathering of information three instruments were used: first, a questionnaire to be answered in the classroom by all the students; second, an intensive interview schedule administered to a sample drawn from the student universe; and, third, an interview schedule for the parents or guardians

of the sample students. This discussion is limited to data derived from the questionnaire.

By random sampling 20 per cent of the questionnaires were selected and processed by IBM machines. This resulted in a statistical data report which indicated some general trends of religiosity among the students. It also suggested certain topics for inclusion in the depth interviews that would follow. The findings here presented are taken from the statistical data report.

To investigate immanent justice and magic, stories were used. This choice of technique was based on the known differences between responses to stories and replies to questions. Through stories, on the one hand, one obtains the affective, spontaneous attitude of the student, and a closer insight into religiosity is attained. The reaction of the child to stories is deeply rooted in its mentality, and is, to a great extent, independent of acquired religious instruction. Through questions, on the other hand, one can hope to reach only the theoretical knowledge the child learned in his catechism lessons.

Description of the variables. Several independent variables were used, of which four will be discussed here. The first is the year of high school in which the student is enrolled: first, second, third, or fourth. The second variable is

intellectual ability. In the schools under study, students in a certain year of high school are assigned to different classes according to intelligence. For example, Class A of the second year in High School X has the more intelligent students, while Class E has the less intelligent ones. The class teachers rated the different classes as above average, average, or below average in intelligence. Because some information was lacking on this point, however, only two categories were ultimately used, namely, above-average and below-average intelligence. We admit that this division is rather crude, but even with such a tool significant results were obtained. The third and fourth variables are sex and age. Age was divided as follows: level one, under 15 years of age; level two, 15 and 16 years; and level three, 17 years of age and older.

Immanent Justice

The cognitive development of the individual, especially of the child, has been studied by the Genevan psychologist Jean Piaget. His findings, corroborated by other researchers, form a reliable starting point for the study of immanent justice.

Piaget's research was on the rational level, but the development of concepts in religious thinking has also been investigated. Thus Goldman's extensive research on the development of religious concepts is found in his *Religious thinking from childhood to adolescence* (1964). He focuses attention on the child's and the adolescent's intellectual struggle to understand (comprehend) the ideas taught in religion classes. Summarizing the findings of earlier researchers as well as his own, Goldman concludes (1964:13): "Thinking applied to religion appears to have the same ingredients and the same pattern (as non-religious thinking)." There is, however, one major difference. Concept formation in religious thinking lags behind the same process in profane thinking. This delay is explained by Goldman (1964:14) as follows.

Religious precepts and concepts are not based upon direct sensory data, but are formed from other perceptions and conceptions of experience . . . The whole structure of religious thinking is therefore based

upon 'vicarious' experience . . . There are no definite religious sensations and perceptions, separate from the child's other sensations and perceptions. Religious thinking is the process of generalizing from various experiences, previous perceptions and already held concepts to an interpretative concept of the activity and nature of the divine.

Thus the concept of immanent justice can be discussed from two points of view: first, as a concept in rational thinking and, secondly, as applied to religion.

According to Piaget (1932) immanent justice is the belief that there is an automatic connection between an evil act and a subsequent event. The latter is considered a punishment of the wrong that was done. To find out with some degree of precision the universality and gradual decline of that characteristic, Piaget told three stories to 167 Swiss children. The first story is as follows.

Once upon a time, two children were stealing apples from an apple tree. Suddenly the keeper appears and the children run away. One of them is caught. The other, trying to reach home by a round-about way, crosses the river over a rotten bridge and falls into the water.

Then came the questions intended to create an easy conversational atmosphere, while allowing, nonetheless, for systematic comparison of answers. "What do you think? Suppose he had not stolen the apples but had all the same crossed the rotten bridge, would he still have fallen into the water?" The answer of the child who asserted that the boy fell into the water because he had committed a theft, and that he would not have fallen into the water if he had not stolen, was classified as a reaction of immanent justice. The children's replies showed a linear inverse relation between age in years and tendency to the immanent-justice reaction to the story. The percentages of these replies, by age group, are as follows: 6 years, 86 per cent; 7-8 years, 73 per cent; 9-10 years, 54 per cent; 11-12 years, 34 per cent.

It was further noted that in a class of backward children 13-14 years old (qualified as a "weak" or "special" class) 57 per cent of the answers were of the immanent-justice type. The reaction under study appears, therefore, to be inversely proportional to the child's chronolog-

ical and mental age. In our study this was taken as the hypothesis.

Parallel research. Several authors have applied the same method and repeated Piaget's stories, with occasional adaptations, to children of various nationalities, races, and creeds.

In Belgium, a study by Caruso gave the following percentages of replies showing the reaction of immanent justice: 6-7 years, 62 per cent; 7-8 years, 58 per cent; 8-9 years, 49 per cent; 9-10 years, 40 per cent; 10-11 years, 29 per cent; 11-13 years, 12 per cent.¹

The story of the bridge was also told by Denis (1943) to 98 Hopi children. The percentages of replies with the reaction of immanent justice are as follows: 12-13 years, 64 per cent; 14-15 years, 47 per cent; 16-17 years, 9 per cent.

Havighurst and Neugarten (1955) used another form of the same story to question 714 children and adolescents of 10 American Indian tribes, with the following percentages of immanent-justice replies: 6-11 years, 70 per cent; 12-18 years, 53 per cent. The authors invoke cultural factors to explain the rather high percentages of replies showing the reaction of immanent justice.

In Ghana, Jahoda (1958) made a similar study and obtained the following percentages:

Content of reaction	Percentage of replies	
	6-10 years	11-18 years
ANIMISM		
(Pure immanence (in things)	45%	8%
Act of God (immanent justice through divine instruction)	33	47
Magical causation (being caused)	7	8
NATURALISM		
Pure accident (would have happened anyway)	0	10
Causal guilt (nervous because of bad conscience, etc.)	0	10
Inconsistent or doubtful answers	15	17

In the former Belgian Congo, and in a quite different manner, Loves (1957) used the story of a theft followed shortly after by the death of the thief owing to a fall from a tree. The following results were obtained from 1,247 boys in Catholic schools:

Content of reaction	Percentage of replies		
	12 years	14 years	16 years
ANIMISM			
Immanent punishment (unspecified origin)	42%	32%	21%
Punishment due to witchcraft	1	5	0
Punishment from God	56	58	72
NATURALISM			
Pure accident, chance	1	5	7

It is rather difficult to compare the different studies, with one another, for the age-level intervals are not the same. As several authors have indicated, it is also difficult to assess the influence of culture, and more particularly, of religious culture. More unanimity might perhaps have been achieved if mental age instead of chronological age had been used to classify the answers. At the same time, the influence of culture would, to some degree, have been taken into account.

There is, however, in all these studies a general trend observable, that is, a regular decrease in the percentage of immanent-justice reactions with the increase of chronological age. Another important point is the trend found by Jahoda and Loves. Their studies show, aside from a decrease of pure immanence, a remarkable convergence of increase in percentages expressing punishment through the intervention of God.

The Tondo data. The story presented to the children is as follows.

Once upon a time, Rolo and Ben were stealing 10

pesos from a store. Suddenly the keeper appears and the two children run away. Rolo is caught. Ben, trying to reach home by another way, crosses the river over a rotten bridge and falls into the water. Why did Ben fall into the water? Underline one answer.

- a. Ben fell into the water because he ran too fast.
- b. Ben fell into the water because he had stolen.
- c. Ben fell into the water because the bridge was old and very weak.

Table 1 is a record of the students' replies. Answers stating that Ben fell into the water because he had stolen were categorized as a reaction of immanent justice. Underlining answer (a) or (c) was considered as acceptance of a natural explanation of the accident. For the computation of chi-square tests, answers under (a) and (c) were combined.

A study of Table 1 reveals that in the question of immanent justice significant differences do not occur by year in school or by intelligence. Girls, however, show a greater tendency toward this reaction than boys do (50 vs. 42 per cent; 0.001) and differences also occur in general, with increasing age (49, 48, and 37 per cent; 0.001).

Comparing the three age levels with one another, we find that the difference between the first and the second age level is not significant (49 vs. 48 per cent; n.s.). However, the third level (17 years and over) has a significantly lower percentage of immanent-justice reactions than the first and second (37 vs. 49 and 48 per cent respectively; 0.001 in both cases). In our population, age 17 years seems to be a turning point in this regard.

Comments. After the data for our study had been collected, a similar study on immanent justice, done earlier in the Philippines (Flores 1964), was brought to our attention. Here the investigator also found a significant difference between girls and boys in the matter under study. The percentages (girls, 43.40; boys, 36.61) follow the same pattern as ours, though ours were slightly higher (girls, 50; boys, 42).

We hypothesized that there would be a decrease in immanent-justice replies as students grew older. This is partially verified by the data reported above and in Table 1. What puzzles us is that the second age level (15-16 years) shows a higher percentage of immanence than the first

age level (under 15). The same phenomenon is found in the data of Dr. Flores: her age-14 group has 36.15, while those aged 16 have 38.76 per cent immanent-justice answers, an increase of 2.61 per cent.² The difference found in our study is only 0.2 per cent. Granted that our age-groupings differ from those of Dr. Flores, the pattern is the same in both cases.

A second puzzling finding is that our third age level (17 years and older) has a much higher percentage of immanence (37 per cent) than the nearest corresponding groups (18 and 20 years) in the report of Dr. Flores; the latter respondents had percentages of only 15.48 and 11.61, respectively. The age-groupings are different, of course, but we do not think this is a sufficient explanation for the great differences between the two populations.

Magic

The second concept to be discussed is one aspect of magic, namely, magic as integrated in prayer. Magic in relation to prayer has been defined by Kwant (1965:223) in these terms.

The magic word and the religious word sometimes are very close to each other. For man can misuse the religious word in a magic way. He does this when he thinks that, by speaking the religious word, he can compel God to produce a certain effect in the world. Man speaks and his word makes God do something in the world or in man. The religious word used in a magic way is not prayer.

For purposes of a comparative framework for the Tondo data, we turn to Goldman's (1964) research to see how magic works out in prayer. That children regard prayers as somehow efficacious and successful seems clear, for otherwise they would not engage in them. Further, this was explicit in almost every child's discussion of prayers. Still, according to Goldman, reasons for accepting prayer as efficacious show four clearly distinguished conceptual stages in thinking.

The first stage is the claim of immediate assurance from God, or materialistic results appearing by magical power, in this case by prayer. Important also is that, according to the findings of Goldman, no insight is evident that factors other than prayer may have caused an

event to happen. This is present up to the chronological age of about nine years, four months (9-4), or mental age (MA) of nine years, nine months (9-9).³

The magical elements of the first stage persist into the second stage, but a little insight is now present. The child is aware that other causative factors might be involved, but confusion persists and magical elements still exist. This stage, which we can call the semi-magical stage of concepts, continues till about 12-3 (MA, 12-2).

The third stage, beginning at about 12 years, is the real conceptual dividing line, at which students move over to a non-magical, and specifically religious, conceptual level. Knowledge of the result of prayer still remains, but now without magical elements.

Lastly we have the fourth stage, beginning at about 16 years. The main emphasis is on faith. It is an advanced level of ideas, maintaining that no certain knowledge of the efficacy of prayer is available.

The Tondo data. The story in the questionnaire is as follows.

One cloudy day, some children decided to go for a walk. Tina wants to join them, but the other children say no. The others do not want Tina to join them because she often causes trouble. When Tina is alone, she prays to God and complains about her companions. A little while later, a violent rain storm starts and the friends of Tina return home all wet.

Why did it rain? Underline one answer.

- a. It rained because it was a cloudy day.
- b. It rained because of Tina's prayers.
- c. It rained because it was the rainy season.

In Table 2 the students' answers are reported. The answers stating that it rained because of Tina's prayer were considered to result from the respondent's belief in the magical efficacy of prayer. The other two answers, namely, (a) it was a cloudy day, and (c) it was the rainy season, were considered non-magical replies.

A study of Table 2 suggests the following findings. Differences in the incidence of magic-in-prayer responses are associated with differences in the levels of all four variables we considered. A closer look at the responses when crosstabulated by year of high school indicates that the biggest difference is between seniors

and all others (26 vs. 31-36 per cent; 0.01, 0.001, and 0.02). Further, belief in the magical efficacy of prayer is expressed by girls more often than boys (34 vs. 28 per cent; 0.001), and by those of low intelligence more often than others (33 vs. 29 percent; 0.02). This belief declines with increasing age, however, being at the 34-per-cent level for those under 15 years of age but only at the 28-per-cent level for students 17 years of age and older. Since the difference between the eldest and the middle age groups (28 and 30 per cent, respectively; n.s.) is not significant, but those between the youngest group and each of the others are significant (0.02 for both), the change-over, such as it is, appears to occur when the student is around 15 years of age.

Comment. Nonetheless, though there is this gradual downward movement, we do not see in our data any "real conceptual dividing line" between a magical and non-magical conceptual level. According to Goldman's research, the non-magical conceptual level would have shown itself in our data by a *sudden drop* in the percentage of answers expressing belief in the magical efficacy of prayer. Even taking into account the later maturation of Filipino youth, a much lower percentage of magic-inspired responses might logically have been expected at the third age level (17 years and older).

This suggests, we believe, that the dimension of magic may not have been measured in our study. It is probable that the answers which we considered inspired by a belief in the magical efficacy of prayer are in fact the result of a mixed reaction involving both immanent justice and magic.

The above-mentioned results also indicate that we did not test the concept "punishment or action of God." For whereas the percentages of "acts of God" reported by Jahoda and Loves show an increase as the students grow older, our percentages decrease with respondents' increasing age. It seems necessary to conclude that we are not in a position to make any valid statements about the belief in the magical efficacy of prayer if they are to be based on this part of the questionnaire.

Conclusion

Some suggestion can be made for reprocessing the data used in this paper or for further research. We first look at magic and secondly at immanent justice.

The tool used for discovering belief in the magical efficacy of prayer shows some defi-

ciencies. The four conceptual stages pointed out by Goldman could and should be incorporated in better fashion into new research design. Further, "It is one's fate" should be considered a possible answer in the questionnaire. Again, in the story we used, the accent was on punishment; it might be interesting to

Table 1

Public high school students classified by selected characteristics,
crossclassified by replies to the story of the bridge
(Tondo, Manila, 1968)

Characteristics	Had stolen	Ran too fast	Bridge was weak	Total	No ans.
A. Year of high school (chi-square, 3.739; df, 3; n.s.)^a					
First	45% (587) ^b	16% (208)	39% (508)	1303	129
Second	48 (542)	16 (178)	36 (398)	1118	51
Third	48 (472)	18 (173)	34 (339)	984	308
Fourth	46 (343)	17 (128)	37 (279)	750	30
B. Intelligence (chi-square, 0.233; df, 1; n.s.)					
Above average	47% (816)	17% (301)	36% (618)	1735	52
Below average	46 (1056)	16 (369)	38 (860)	2285	190
C. Sex (chi-square, 23.682; df, 1; p < 0.001)					
Boys	42% (778)	17% (310)	40% (742)	1830	159
Girls	50 (1166)	16 (377)	34 (782)	2325	89
D. Age level (chi-square, 22.436; df, 2; p < 0.001)					
One (under 15)	49% (859)	16% (285)	35% (616)	1760	122
Two (15-16)	48 (882)	15 (285)	37 (677)	1844	83
Three (17+)	37 (178)	21 (103)	42 (201)	482	35

^aFor purposes of the chi-square computation (test for two independent samples), the columns entitled "Ran too fast" and "Bridge was weak" were throughout this table collapsed into one - the non-immanent-justice, or natural, reaction. *Gamma* values are small in all cases: A, -.02; B, .02; C, -.15; D, .09.

^bNumbers in parentheses are absolute frequencies.

broaden the perspective and include the notion of reward or blessing for others.

Turning to immanent justice, we think that a better insight could be gained if the data were processed in a different way. Instead of using the kind of age categories we did, we might improve the study by using a year-by-year

distinction. Further, the belief in fate could perhaps be distinguished from immanent justice. In this way, we might make even clearer the decreasing recourse to immanent justice with the growth in chronological age. One step more could be taken. Those giving an immanent-justice answer could be probed to discover

Table 2

Public high school students classified by selected characteristics, crossclassified by replies to the story of Tina and her friends (Tondo, Manila, 1968)

Characteristic	Prayer did it	It was cloudy	Rainy season	Total	No ans.
A. Year of high school (chi-square, 19.473; df, 3; $p < 0.001$)^a					
First	32% (346) ^b	45% (493)	23% (257)	1096	336
Second	36 (361)	40 (410)	24 (241)	1012	157
Third	31 (278)	46 (412)	23 (203)	893	129
Fourth	26 (179)	51 (359)	23 (161)	699	81
B. Intelligence (chi-square, 6.482; df, 1; $p < 0.002$)					
Above average	29% (472)	52% (839)	19% (305)	1616	171
Below average	33 (654)	70 (791)	27 (523)	1968	507
C. Sex (chi-square, 14.944; df, 1; $p < 0.001$)					
Boys	28% (450)	45% (720)	27% (434)	1604	385
Girls	34 (714)	46 (954)	20 (428)	2096	318
D. Age level (chi-square, 9.608; df, 2; $p < 0.01$)					
One (under 15)	34% (528)	44% (676)	22% (342)	1546	336
Two (15-16)	30 (500)	46 (779)	24 (394)	1673	254
Three (17+)	28 (118)	46 (194)	26 (111)	423	94

^aFor purposes of chi-square computation (test for two independent samples) the columns entitled "It was cloudy" and "Rainy season" were throughout this table collapsed into one - the non-magical, or natural, reaction. *Gamma* values are small in all cases: A, .07; B, .09; C, -.14; D, .10.

^bNumbers in parentheses are absolute frequencies.

if they think that retaliation emanates from "the thing itself," or from a supernatural power. In the latter case we would again ask if the punishment comes from God or is due to witchcraft.

Several questions are left unanswered and could be taken up in further research. At a certain stage in the individual's growth, as the evidence indicates, immanent justice seems to be left behind. How is the transition made from one stage to another? Is it really left behind, or is it still active in divine justice? Is this spontaneous reaction integrated into and given new meaning by the thought of God's justice? What is the influence of the surrounding culture on the development of immanent justice? What aspects of Philippine culture should be taken into account to explain the apparent upward trend in immanent-justice belief between 15 and 17 years of age?

Notes

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1. At the time of this study (1936) Caruso was studying at the Institute of Psychology at Louvain. See also Caruso 1943.

2. I used the data on Flores' Story III, since this one is closest in content to the one employed in the Tondo study.

3. A subject's *mental age* (MA) is the chronological age at which the average child (in the norming popula-

tion who took a certain test) does as well as the subject does (on the same test). See Cronbach 1960:169.

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