

ETHICS: THE FUNDAMENTAL REMEDY TO THE FEARS AND TEARS OF THE NIGERIAN NATION AND ITS RETURN OF TRIUMPH

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Abstract

In his play “Hamlet”, Shakespeare lamented, “Something is rotten in the State of Denmark”. Something is wrong with the Nigerian soul. There are structural breakdowns in Nigeria in all sectors. Nigeria has been described as fantastically Corrupt and as the Poverty Capital of the World. There is a culture of unbridled wasteful selfishness in Nigeria. There is lack of rule of law in almost every sector in Nigeria. These are signs of bad governance and moral irresponsibility, which has resulted to the fears and tears of Nigeria as a nation. Today, there is bitterness and hostility in Nigeria. There is insecurity of life and property manifested in terrorism, militancy and self-determination groups all over Nigeria. These have increased the menace of armed robbery, kidnapping and ritual killing of human beings, human person/organ trafficking and unauthorized possession of life ammunitions. The State has failed to control crimes and to enforce moral standard. The citizens have erred in virtuous living. The root of these imbroglios is the negligence of Aretaic (Virtues) Ethics. This paper proposes a return to Aretaic Ethics as a veritable guide to human acts. The responsibility of the acting agent is indispensable in the search for a better Nigeria and a better Africa.

Key words: *Aretaic ethics, insecurity, moral responsibility, terrorism, fears.*

Introduction

We now live in a nation where doctors destroy health, lawyers destroy justice, universities destroy knowledge, the press destroys information, religion destroys morals, and banks destroy the economy¹.

In Nigeria and Africa, there are many cases of noble achievements of excellence and merits by many individuals in many facets of life and services which are neither recognized nor rewarded. On the ominous side too, our daily news media and papers record obnoxious crimes in their various orders of nefariousness. There is little or virtually no identification of the acting agents in many cases. As a consequence, the agent will not be rewarded or punished respectively as the case may be. In this way of acting, achievements and patriotism are not praised and crimes and criminals are hidden and covered up instead of being deterred. This system does not motivate honest

¹ Hedges, C., in Freithoughtproject.com (visited 16 August, 2015).

citizens even in the least way. It rather resembles the American jargon of “Good bye Good men”. It only breeds apathy, tepidity, indifference, laxity and lack of interest on the part of the citizenry. The result of all these is mediocrity, never-do-well and irresponsibility in human performance output. This invariably leads to lack of motivational and exemplary statesmanship. Where criminals are not brought to face the law and answer for their crimes, crimes will continue to multiply in geometric progressions. There will continue to be crimes without criminals.

The entire scenario described above is an issue of the anonymity of the acting agent. This is one of and in fact, the greatest problem in Nigeria and Africa. Our society needs to be schooled on Virtue Ethics Theory, which emphasizes the prominent and indispensable place of the acting agent. In this paper I wish to argue for the rediscovery of Aretaic ethics – that is the ethics of the acting agent as the lasting solution to global debacle to the problems of Nigeria as a nation and African at large. Aretaic ethics otherwise known as Virtue ethics emphasizes the role of one's character and the virtues that one's character embodies for determining or evaluating ethical behaviour². Aretaic return offers a very veritable and a suitable ethics to guide human acts in seeking out a solution for the corrupt fiasco of Nigeria and Africa.

Moral Virtue and its Importance in Moral Discourse

In our study of Philosophical Ethics, the first question is; “how should man behave in order to actualize fully his human personality and thus be worthy of the name human? The usual answer is that man should be virtuous. Then, the next question is; what is virtue? Virtue is described as a habitus which improves/develops human personality in a way worthy of being human. Virtue is a stable attitude or disposition to an authentic free human behaviour. It is a disposition to act in ways respondent to the demands of reason. It is being master of one's wilful conduct.

Moral virtue in ethical discourse adopts the classical principle which says that: “**Action manifests the being.** That is to say that “**as a being is so it acts**”. This principle asserts that if one recognizes the value of honest living, when this disposition is deeply and strongly rooted in him/her, even if when one is tempted with dishonest gain or action, he/she knows that it is not a worthy action to accomplish. With this stable disposition, the virtuous man knows the value of honesty by the principle of co-naturality. This means that by being good, he/she recognizes the good when seen.

Another aspect of the above principle is that if one is to accomplish a good recognize and reject a recognized evil, there is the need of an interior

² Carr, D. & Steutel, J., (eds.), *Virtue Ethics and Moral Education*. Routledge, 1999, p. 22.

force, a determination that makes one overcome temptations and difficulties therein. This stable-habitual, interior disposition that makes it possible for one to reject a recognised evil, and to choose, assert and accomplish something good is called **Virtue**. Consequently, before any ethical values be it in good or bad disposition, all depends on our interior life. It depends on the habitus – good or bad which we have already acquired.

The term *virtus* (Latin), derives from *vir* (Latin) which means manly or vigour. Others trace the meaning from *vis* (Latin) which means force. Thus the term virtue is described as a force, vigour, the motor of moral life. It then follows that we act in a certain way because we are in a certain way. We are in a certain way because we are that way – thanks to the action we till now have accomplished. Virtue therefore is a way of being. In a virtuous act, we relive all our past and project our future. This means that with the actions we accomplish now, we are disposing ourselves to become in a way and thus to accomplish again certain types of actions. Virtue therefore is a habitus that orients and perfects the operative faculty to do good. It is a kind of inclination, a second nature which disposes the operative faculty to habitually good behaviour. This goes in line with St. Thomas Aquinas' definition of virtue as "*Bonus operantis habitus*" (good operating habit). Virtue is that habitual disposition to do the good thing. Virtues are not judged to be good because they tend to induce actions that, for other moral reasons, are good or right. Virtues are acquired character traits or dispositions that are judged to be good.

In the light of Aristotle, virtue consists in an equilibrium or harmony in a rational sense. It is a harmonious disposition of a person under the guide of reason which helps one to relate in equilibrium to the object of one's act or profession. Vice on the other hand for Aristotle is disharmony, lack of equilibrium. Vice consists in the habitual subtraction or lack to the rule of right reasoning. On the positive note, Virtues are directed toward the good in a person. The harmony produced by virtue constitutes good life and the fulfilment of the human person.

What is Aretaic (Virtue) Ethics Theory?

Aretaic Ethics (from the Greek *arete*), also known as Virtue Ethics is a collection of normative ethical philosophies that places emphasis on being rather than doing³. The central concern of Aretaic Ethics broadly interpreted is moral character, that is, what sort of person one is and should be. In other words, in Aretaic Ethics, morality stems from the identity and/or character of

³ Although ethics does not deal only with being but also doing. Before ethics there was an ethic (action), we judge a being by his actions (*Agere sequitor esse*: as a being is so he acts).

the individual, rather than being a reflection of the actions (or consequences thereof) of the individual⁴. From inception, there has been debate among various adherents of virtue ethics concerning what specific virtues are morally praiseworthy. Most theorists agree that morality comes as a result of intrinsic virtues. Intrinsic virtues are the common link that unites the disparate normative philosophies into the field known as Virtue Ethics. On this issue of what virtue consists of, Plato believes that virtue is effectively an end to be sought. Aristotle on his part states that the virtues function more as means to safeguard human relations, particularly authentic friendship, without which one's quest for happiness is frustrated. But what is common is that Virtue Ethicists agree that human actions cannot be based on only Deontological and Consequentialist Ethics. Aretaic Ethics differs from the two in that its focus on being rather than doing. Aretaic Ethics philosopher will identify virtues, desirable characteristics, which the moral or virtuous person embodies. Possessing these virtues, in Virtue Ethics, is what makes one moral. One's actions are a mere reflection of one's inner morality. To the virtue philosopher, action cannot be used as a demarcation of morality, because a virtue encompasses more than just a simple selection of action. Instead, it is about a way of being (as a being is so it acts), that would cause the person exhibiting the virtue to make a certain "virtuous" choice consistently in each situation.

Virtue Theory traces its roots to Aristotle. However, the Classical Republicanism draws it primarily on Tacitus. Aristotle emphasizes on the "*polis*" as the summit of political organisation, and the role of the virtues in enabling human beings to flourish in that environment. Classical Republicanism in contrast, emphasizes Tacitus' concern that power and luxury can corrupt individuals and destroy liberty. Thus, Tacitus during the transformation of the Roman republic into an empire conceived that virtue should be a shield against this sort of corruption and a means to preserve the good life one has, rather than a means to achieve the good life one does not possess. In other words, we can distinguish the two traditions in these ways: Virtue Ethics relies on Aristotle's fundamental distinction between the "human-being-as-he-is from the human-being-as-he-should-be", while Classical Republicanism relies on the Tacitean distinction of the "human-being-as-he-is from the human-being-as-he-is-at-risk-of-becoming"⁵. Both authors however, in divergent ways emphasize the importance of virtue ethics. For Aristotle, virtue enables human excellence, while for Tacitus, virtue is a means to preserve good life and protect it against corruption.

4 Wikipedia .org, virtue_ethics #cite note-2.

⁵ Pocock, J.G.A. The Machiavellian Moment: "Virtue ethics", Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, February 2015.

History and Development of Aretaic Ethics

Basically, Aretaic Ethics was coined during the 20th century. However, the history, the key concepts, and roots of Aretaic Ethics derive from the traditional ancient Greek philosophy, traced from the works of Plato and Aristotle. What we know today as the Four Cardinal Virtues: Wisdom, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance are found in Plato's Republic. These virtues also feature prominently in Aristotle's moral theory. Thus Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (c. 350 BC) is traditionally seen as the founding text of virtue ethics. The dominant concepts in this theory are *arete* (excellence or virtue), *phronesis* (practical or moral wisdom), and *eudaimonia* (happiness or flourishing). These concepts imply that Aretaic Ethics theory emphasizes excellence, practical wisdom and happiness as the end of human actions and behaviours.

Historically, several philosophical traditions have witnessed concern for Aretaic Ethics. The theory is also found in the study of history by moralistic historians such as Livy, Plutarch, and Tacitus. With time, the Greek idea of the virtues found its way in the Roman philosophy through Cicero. It was later incorporated into Christian Moral Theology by St. Ambrose of Milan. St. Thomas Aquinas in the Scholastic period provided the most comprehensive consideration of the virtues from a theological perspective in his *Summa Theologiae* and his Commentaries on the Nicomachean Ethics.

Aristotle's account of virtue begins from the idea that within any "practice" or domain of life (profession), goodness is understood in relation to the *telos* (literally meaning: "end" or "purpose") of that domain or "that, for whose sake everything is done". For instance, Aristotle treats medicine as a domain whose *telos* is "health" and military strategy as a domain whose *telos* is "victory"⁶. In relation to a given domain, an acquired character trait is a virtue to the extent that the person who possesses it is thereby better able to contribute to the *telos* of that domain. The underlying idea is that human happiness or flourishing (*eudaimonia*) requires that people are oriented towards their various activities in ways that respect the intrinsic ends of the domains to which those activities belong. Thus, to identify the *telos* of a practice, one must discover the meaning of that practice within the community of practitioners. In this view, a claim about the *telos* of any practice is not just the expression of a personal value judgment; it involves some (perhaps

⁶ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1, section 1.

creative) interpretation of what is already there⁷. Sandel puts it succinctly that, we identify the norms appropriate to social practices by trying to grasp the characteristic end, or purpose, of those practices⁸.

The hallmark of the aretaic theory is that if professionals adhere to the virtues of their professions or domain, there will be a better and honest human society.

Virtue ethics in some States and civilizations

In the ancient and medieval periods, Virtue Ethics was the prevailing approach to ethical thinking of the Western world. The term virtue was in use by various civilizations. Virtue ethics was prominent in the intellectual life of 16th-century Italy, as well as 17th and 18th century Britain and America. In fact, in the works of Niccolò Machiavelli and David Hume the term virtue was frequently employed. Aretaic Ethics was also current in the Republicans of the English Civil War period, the 18th century English Whigs, and the prominent figures among the Scottish Enlightenment and the American Founding Fathers. Virtue Ethics was used during the transformation of the Roman Republic into an Empire. The founding fathers of the empire conceived that virtue should be a shield against all sort of corruption and a means to preserve the good life one has, and even as a means by which to achieve the good life one does not yet have. One most outstanding example here is the presence of the aretaic turn in American constitutional theory, where proponents argue for an emphasis on virtue and vice of constitutional adjudicators⁹.

In the religious setting too, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all shared a set of virtues that defined the good physician/professional. For centuries, that ethics united physicians across cultural and national boundaries in a community of moral values based on the virtues of benevolence, respect for human life, and the vulnerability of the sick¹⁰. Virtue remained current and operative during the period of republicanism and/or liberalism, and in fact it appeared prominently in their classical tradition.

⁷ Sandel, M. J., *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* London: Penguin, 2009, pp. 184 –192, 203 –207; Anderson, E., *Value in Ethics and Economics.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 143.

⁸ Sandel, M. J., *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* P. 98

⁹ Solum, [L. B.](#), *The Aretaic Turn in Constitutional Theory.* [Brooklyn Law Review](#), Vol. 70, No. 475, 2004-05

Georgetown University Law Center, February 19, 2015.

¹⁰ See Sgreccia, E., Mele, V. & Miranda, G., *Le radici della bioetica, Atti del Congresso Internazionale*,

Loss of Virtue Ethics

As earlier noted, Virtue ethics was the prevailing approach to ethical thinking of the early Western world. However, the tradition of virtue ethics suffered a huge set back during the Renaissance period, and during the early modern period. It started suffering an eclipse as Aristotelianism fell out of favour in the West. With the modern advancements in professionalism and utility concepts, deontology and utilitarianism forced virtue theory to be moved to the margins of Western philosophy. There was a larger conflict between virtue theory and its philosophical rivals – Deontology and Consequentialism. For its rivals the acting agent is not important. What are more important are the duty performed and its outcome, but who performs the action remains insignificant.

One of the major reasons of the dark moment of the virtue ethics was the influence of modernity which as it were, treated with askance the Aristotelian traditional ethics and metaphysics. Again, principlism, proposed by Tom Beauchamp and Jim Childress, became the most popular model of bioethical decision making to be applied in policy making according to the Belmont Report¹¹. Beauchamp and Childress proposed four philosophical principles of autonomy, justice, beneficence and non-maleficence. These principles were supposedly formulated to stand on equal footing, but the principle of autonomy eventually overshadowed the ethical discourse. By toppling the paternalist ideal, it had inadvertently fuelled blatant individualism with a reductionist concept of the person that was ultimately unsatisfactory as an ethical system¹². Discontent soon brewed, as the consensus achieved by this ethic appeared contrived, and its uncritical support of the status quo as a possible façade masked the ideologies and interests of those in power. Ethics no longer looked like a dialogue to discover truth. Legal concerns began to trump ethical ones. Thus, in response to the insufficiency of principlism, a plethora of competing models gained prominence: casuistry, narrative ethics, feminist care ethics, phenomenology, and utilitarian ethics, to name a few, all seeking to relocate ethics in the context of the situation instead of the character of the moral agent which virtue ethics proposes¹³.

Given that moral scepticism abounds, nihilism and relativism became obvious, pragmatists willingly accepted and put into practice the slogan that

¹¹ Beauchamp, T. L. & Childress, J. F., *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

¹² Dubose, E.R., Hamel, R. P., et.al. (eds.), *A Matter of Principles? Ferment in U.S. Bioethics*. Valley Forge, PA, Trinity Press International, 1994, in Tham, J., *Secularization of Bioethics*, in the *National Catholic Bioethics Centre*, 443, 2008.

¹³ Tham, J., *Secularization of Bioethics*, op.cit.

‘whatever will make one happy is not wrong’. The entire ethico-philosophical enterprise was put into jeopardy. Thus moral philosophy as it were can no longer give moral normative and guidance to human acts and the pressing human questions of the day. With such moral high ground lost, renowned ethicists began to justify infanticide, euthanasia, abortion, eugenics for sex selection, artificial human reproduction, human and animal cloning, the harvesting of organs from the not-yet-dead, the creation of human-animal hybrids, bestiality, etc¹⁴.

These and many other salient ethical issues have raised the search for the true good, for, without which ethical inquiry is fruitless, relevant questions of justice, fairness, solidarity and subsidiarity that enhance social living and common good will be walked-over. The entire endeavour is to provide the ends or *telos* of human acts. It is only this that can give meaning to human person, enhance the good life and happiness which is the end of ethics. This is only possible with recourse to Virtue Ethics.

The Aretaic Return

The revival of Aretaic ethics came in to bring about change in the emphasis on deontology and consequentialism. However, there are evidences that despite the modernity crisis, virtue ethics was never exterminated at any time. The tradition instead receded into the background of European philosophical thought all those centuries. Such that virtue remained current and operative during the period, and in fact appeared prominently in the classical tradition of republicanism/liberalism and in the epochs already mentioned above¹⁵.

The revival of virtue theory in the contemporary period is frequently traced to the philosopher G. E. M. Anscombe, with his work called “Modern Moral Philosophy in 1958”. After him, other authors like Michael Stocker began to emerge. Stocker in 1976 presented a work called “The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories” in which he summarized the main aretaic criticisms of deontological and consequentialist ethics¹⁶. Alasdair MacIntyre

¹⁴ Smith, W.J., *Culture of Death: The Assault on Medical Ethics in America*. San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000.

¹⁵ Virtue ethics was prominent in the intellectual life of 16th-century Italy, as well as 17th- and 18th-century Britain and America. It was also in vogue among the republicans of the English Civil War period, the 18th-century English Whigs, and the prominent figures among the Scottish Enlightenment and the American Founding Fathers. In fact, in the work of Niccolò Machiavelli and David Hume and some other Enlightenment philosophers the term virtue was frequently employed and continuously emphasized.

¹⁶ Stocker, M., “The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories”. *The Journal of Philosophy*. No. 73 (14): 1976, pp. 453–466.

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tried to reconstruct a virtue-based theory in dialogue with modern and postmodern thought in his work “After Virtue” and “Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry”¹⁷.

Virtue theory returned in Western philosophical thought in the 20th century. Today it is one of the three dominant approaches to normative theories (the other two being Deontology and Consequentialism)¹⁸. Again, there is today the persistent appreciation that the moral agents, i.e., the acting agent/person, cannot be left out of moral judgments. This fact has hovered over general ethics and medical ethics even in this period of its most radical change. Still more, in carrying out moral acts and their analyses, intention, moral psychology, and the story of the agent’s life cannot be separated from the agent’s moral behavior.

Criticisms of Aretaic Ethics

This work does not only extol Virtue Ethics against other normative ethics (Deontology, Consequentialism, etc.), as though they do not have a place in the account of the moral life. Although Virtue Ethics has grown remarkably in the last thirty-five years, it is still seen as very much in the minority, particularly in the area of applied ethics. Virtue Cannot Stand Alone”. Even, no set of virtues can give normative force to professional virtues. Aretaic Ethics (theory), by itself, is insufficient to constitute a comprehensive normative theory of ethics. On itself, alone, the inherent difficulties of virtue as a normative concept are not, thereby, fully resolved.

Furthermore, there is a great deal of disagreement within Aretaic Ethics over what virtues are and what they are not. There are also difficulties in identifying what is the ‘virtuous’ action to take in all circumstances, and how to define a virtue. This is because there is no single or definitive answer to what the virtues are, they are time-changing. Although Aretaic Ethics strives at making the individual a better person and instilling virtuous qualities in him/her, it does not really help when encountering an ethical dilemma, as there are not any guidelines on what to do as normative ethics suggests. Moral reasoning, arguably, could be what is 'supposed' to help overcome ethical conflicts, but what if one's reasoning is flawed or immoral?

Again, since Aretaic Ethics concentrates more on the qualities an individual has to enhance or improve in order to become a good person, its critics contend that it cannot indicate actions that are morally acceptable and

¹⁷ Other philosophers and theologians of Virtue ethics are: Philippa Foot, Stanley Hauerwas, Rosalind Hurst House, Roger Crisp and Michael Slote.

¹⁸ Hursthouse, R., Introduction. In *On Virtue Ethics*. Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 1-24.

permitted from the ones that should be avoided. A typical instance would be in court, Virtue Theorists consider murder as an immoral act which makes it unsuitable to be used when it comes to legislation. For them too, Virtue Ethics is not action-guiding. Furthermore, given the pluralism and diversity of cultures and societies, determining the nature of virtues would be unsustainable. This is further compounded because of the difference in opinions and perspectives of people which are inherently different from each other. Thus what is morally right or wrong for people would be difficult to identify. And it will also be limited to only a number of virtues since it focuses only on the individual and not the population.

Some critics of Virtue Ethics have accused virtue ethics as misguidance since its possession is the product of luck or genetical or environmental endowment¹⁹. Where this is the case, one cannot in justice indict another for not possessing it. This is because many will not naturally have the genetic disposition. It will be very much unethical therefore, to demand it from all.

In a legalistically shaped society, one which, in addition, emphasizes individual choices and life-styles, even the narrow idea of role-related responsibilities and duties is challenged. The only duty modern libertarians recognize is not to infringe on the liberty of others. Everything else is beyond duty. On this view, virtue in the classical sense demands too much altruism of individuals, communities, or institutions. This seems to demand too much of course. But this demand is deemed attainable by the proponents of Eudaimonism since happiness or having a good life is said to be achievable by practicing the values of an individual in daily activities and in resolving ensuing life conflicts.

The features of the Nigerian Nation at present: the “Fears and Tears”

In the past, African nations had not much problems with regard to moral rectitude. This is because there were many taboos of the dos and don'ts that helped to check crimes and immoral behaviours. Material and moral sufferings were not very much the case of traditional African nations. However, today, Nigeria and most African nations have become the centre of both maladies: material and moral suffering. At present, Nigeria is among the “Under Developed Third World” countries. According to Krishna Panchal, Nigeria has been described as the poverty capital of the world. In Nigeria, about 89.9 million people live in severe poverty. This number amounts to more than 50%

¹⁹ Wilson, E.O., *Sociobiology*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.) 1980. Ibe

of the entire national population²⁰. Only about 10% of the national population enjoys the resources of the nation. Thus the citizens are without employment, and adequate salaries. Basic needs such as rights to food, shelter and medicals are still inexistent. Quality education has been dragged to the sludge. Dilapidated infrastructures have returned to the level nonexistence, especially the government/public facilities.

On the moral suffering, Nigeria is also in a muddled and sorry state. Nigeria and her citizens embraced secular ethics and humanism. Thus materialistic and hedonistic tendencies of greed, envy, covetousness, and egoism, embezzlement of public and private funds, unaccountability²¹, and corruption of all types, discrimination, partiality, favouritism and nepotism have become accepted social structures. All these have negative impact on the rule of law. These are the resultant effects of despotic leadership, political, professional and business tyranny. There is gross lack of the spirit of Common Good, lack of statesmanship, philanthropism, egalitarianism, solidarity and subsidiarity from the highest to lowest level in all sectors even in the religious sector.

While Nigeria is a rich oil nation, the reality of mismanagement of the resources of the nation and the presence of corruption, unemployment, inequalities etc., have destroyed the nation's economic, political and social framework. Thus the growing population of poverty in the country makes the management of poverty in Nigeria difficult, despite the expectation of the U.N.O.'s Sustainable Development Goals to end extreme poverty by 2050.

Furthermore, Nigeria has one of the alarming records of crime rates in the world. There are uncontrollable cases of armed robbery attacks, pickpockets, shoplifting and obtaining by tricks (for which the famous decree 419 was enacted), due to increased poverty among population²². In Nigeria, crime control and prevention is still menaced by numerous complex problems, such that when an opportunity for crime is blocked, an offender has several alternative types of displacement. The most worrying situation is: why is it that Nigerian criminals come out from prisons as hardened criminals instead of reformed citizens? The high rate of poverty in the nation has been identified

²⁰ Panchal, K., "The Poverty Capital of the World: NIGERIA", in Borgen Magazine Seattle Washington, August 28, 2020.

²¹ Ibe, A.C., Ethical Dilemmas in Development Funding: Possible Pitfalls To Be Avoided, in Lenten Guide: The National Lenten Campaign, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, 2013.

²² "Statistical Analysis on Crime Rate in Nigeria." UKEssays.com. 11 2018. All Answers Ltd. 10 2019 <<https://www.ukessays.com/essays/statistics/statistical-analysis-of-crime-in-nigeria.php?vref=1>>.04/10/17, visited on October 13, 2019, at 1:10pm.

as one factor and the root cause of this uncontrollable nature of crimes in Nigeria. The skyrocketing unemployment level in the country is a reason for the youths to take to crime to support themselves. A situation where one graduates in school and ends up jobless for many years is a clear invitation into a world of crime. Poverty and economic deprivation have been seen to be the number one **cause of crime** in the country. This is aided by corruption, greed, envy, jealousy, inordinate ambitions, insatiability and lack of patriotic spirit, etc.

Inordinate acquisition and worship of wealth and our society which accepts them without censorship and caution lure many youths into crimes. Such people who flaunt and brandish their ill-gotten wealth force the younger ones to desire to be like them and as such, the crime rates rise day by day. Today for these and all other vices, many youths take up to drugs, cultism, armed robbery and other violent crimes.

Another cause of fears and tears in Nigeria is inordinate political ambition. The quest for political power leads politicians into arming the youths with dangerous weapons to serve as thugs during electioneering campaigns but after they get into power, they forget the youths. Invariably some of these abandoned thugs are compelled to use the guns to fend for themselves through stealing and kidnapping.

Corruption is the major reason why there are tears and fears in Nigeria today. Many economists have observed that corruption is the “single greatest obstacle” to Nigeria’s prosperity²³. In Nigeria, corruption is present in the everyday lives of citizens from businesses to the government. On account of bribery and corruption, all national systems and structures - from the executive, the legislature and judiciary have been destroyed. The private and public business sectors now take laws into their hands and become corrupt too. With the security corps participating in the chronic corruption system, they become moribund and incompetent to maintain laws and order. In Nigeria today, laws and orders are contravened and unchecked. There is examination and election malpractices and riggings, there is miscarriage of justice, etc., instigated and perpetrated by those at the helm of affairs. With this being the case, there is travesty of justice and the rule of law. This has affected economic, education and socio-political structures of Nigeria. Consequently, there is disruption in the society. A nation in this situation will begin to operate on survival of the fittest or the smartest. Might becomes power. Crimes will be condoned and merits and excellence will be down-trodden. Criminals get out unpunished and excellence and merits will not be rewarded. There will be

²³ Panchal, K., “The Poverty Capital of the World: NIGERIA”.

apathy in the practice of virtues and intrepidity in committing crimes. This way of life increases the tears and fears of Nigeria and her citizens.

Furthermore, on account of corruption in Nigeria, there is inequality, marginalization and discrimination within the nation. This is evident in the presence of poorly allocated resources. While Nigeria has a lot of resources, these resources are reserved for the wealthy who can afford them. This is evident from the huddled Covid-19 palliative packages discovered during the recent youths protest in Nigeria²⁴. This palliative was to be given to people during the period of lockdown. This type of behaviour increases the yawning gap of inequality between the wealthy/political elites and the people living in poverty²⁵. Furthermore, the inequality in the country also manifests itself in the lack of federal character in political appointments and allotment of positions and services.

Unemployment is another cause of fears and tears in Nigeria. In Nigeria, only about 44.6% of the youths have employment. About more than half of the population of youths in Nigeria are not gainfully employed. While this population is unemployed, the lack of national well fair programme in Nigeria worsens the situation. Most often, salaries of the employed and pensions of retirees are not paid regularly or never at all till death of the subject concerned. Where this is the situation, hunger, suffering and hardship will multiply to extremes. Infrastructures and private homes will dilapidate. Education on all levels will decline. This is the face of the Nigerian nation and some other African countries at present.

The greatest cause of fears and tears in Nigeria at present is insecurity. Nigeria battled with militant and insurgent groups for a long time. The militant groups besieged and exhibited bloody confrontations with government. For the time when it seemed that many of the militant groups have been persuaded to embrace the Amnesty programme of government, when Nigerian government and her people expected to heave a sigh of relief, there emerged the onset of army of terrorist groups. The extremist of them is known as the Boko Haram sect with its foreign allies. In July 2009, the outbreak of the Boko Haram uprising in the country marked the distasteful beginning of a determined group of terror merchants who initiated a recurring pattern of violent and bloody riots, attacks and bombings. This group has unleashed disasters not only on police stations, army barracks, and government establishments but also on banks, businesses, Churches (Christian and later the mosques). Some Muslim clerics also have fallen to the raging inferno of

²⁴ Obiezu, T., Covid - 19 Pandemic: Nigerians justify massive Looting of Covid 19 Supplies. VOA News, United States, October 27, 2020, 03:57 AM

²⁵ Panchal, K., "The Poverty Capital of the World: NIGERIA".

Boko Haram violence²⁶. With Boko Haram, Nigeria has gradually slipped into a terrorist enclave. The alarming dimensions of the Boko Haram's terror acts were particularly their forceful attempt to impose a religious ideology on a constitutionally recognized secular state and their introduction of suicide terrorism on Nigerian soil, a tradition alien to Nigeria and Nigerians²⁷.

Furthermore, the insecurity situation in Nigeria is worsened by the presence of more than ten militant groups in Nigeria today²⁸, some are fighting for their personal interests while some others are pursuing genuine course for the common good. These include the various self-determination groups in almost every region of Nigeria. Just very recently again, Nigeria witnessed the #EndSars protests by the Youths of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This protest was organized to address the tears and fears of all, especially the youths of the nation²⁹.

With the above scenario, all efforts to bail out Nigeria have proved abortive and inadequate. This is because the efforts to achieve development in industry in the country, a strong criterion for economic development and the improvement of the country's Human Development Indices has continued to suffer setbacks in the face of a blistering climate of terror and bombings. The effect of terrorist activities such as suicide bombings, kidnappings, destruction of lives, public infrastructure, private and entrepreneurial investments, the climate of fear, panic and confusion and a heated and ungovernable polity has continued to make Nigeria an unsuitable bride for foreign investments. This not only poses a threat to the nascent democracy, it has also endangered efforts to achieve industrial development in the country³⁰.

From the above scenario, the State has failed to control crimes/corruption and to enforce moral standard. The citizens have erred in virtuous living. The root cause of these imbroglios is the negligence of Aretaic (Virtues) Ethics.

²⁶ Imhonopi, D., & Urim, U. M., The Spectre of Terrorism and Nigeria's Industrial Development: A Multi-Stakeholder Imperative, in African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies: AJCJS, Vol.9, Issue 1, May 2016.

²⁷ Imhonopi, D., & Urim, U. M., The Spectre of Terrorism and Nigeria's Industrial Development....

²⁸Wikipedia Template: Nigerian militant groups:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Nigerian_militant_group.

²⁹ BBC News, Africa: How the End Sars protests have changed Nigeria forever, 23 October, 2020.

³⁰ Imhonopi, D., & Urim, U. M., The Spectre of Terrorism and Nigeria's Industrial Development....

The Aretaic Ethics, the Model for the Triumph of the Nigerian Nation

Aretaic Ethics focuses on the agent and his/her character as it is expressed in, and influenced by, intention, desire, choice, strength of will, and caring and/or feeling for others. Accountability, innocence, and guilt are resultants of the interplay of these factors in the character of the agent. In Virtue Ethics, actions are judged to be good because they are in character for a virtuous person. They are constitutive of living well – of flourishing. A morally well-constituted individual cultivates virtues not as rules of thumb for moral action, but because such virtues are characteristic of the kind of person she/he is or wants to be³¹.

Aretaic Ethics maintains that the human life has a purpose. According to Aristotle as well as Plato, this purpose is the state of “*Eudaimonia*” (εὐδαιμονία). The term *Eudaimonia* is a Greek word translated as ‘well-being’, ‘happiness’, ‘blessedness’. In the context of Virtue Ethics, it is described as ‘human flourishing’³². *Eudaimonia* in this sense is not a subjective, but an objective state. It is a character of the well-lived life. *Eudaimonia* is the proper goal of human life. It consists of exercising the characteristic human quality of reason as the soul's most proper and nourishing activity. In his Nicomachean *Ethics*, Aristotle, in line with Plato, maintains that the pursuit of *eudaimonia* is an “activity of the soul in accordance with perfect virtue”³³, which further could only properly be exercised in the characteristic human community – the polis or city-state³⁴. The implication here is that private or public well-lived life has positive impact in the society.

This Aretaic turn has influences on other philosophical disciplines. In Epistemology for instance, a distinctive Virtue Epistemology was developed by Linda Zagzebski et.al. Likewise in Political Theory, there arose a discussion of “Virtue Politics” and in legal theory; we have some literatures on virtue jurisprudence³⁵. One most outstanding example here as we have already seen above is the presence of the aretaic turn in American constitutional theory, where proponents argue for an emphasis on virtue and vice of constitutional adjudicators³⁶. The contention here is that with Aretaic

³¹ Ibe, A.C., *Virtue Ethics: The Recourse to the Problem of Rectitude and Civility in Africa*. Uzopietro Publishing Company, Owerri Nigeria, 2017, p. 11.

³² Oman, L.P. & Fieser, J., *Virtue Theory*. In *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, 6th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2009, pp. 146-169.

³³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by William David Ross. Oxford University Press, 1980, Book I.

³⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by William David Ross, book 1.

³⁵ Ibe, A.C., *Virtue Ethics...*, op. cit., pp. 31ff; Benoît, G., *Ethics in Politics: Why it matters more than ever and how it can make a difference*. Geneva, Globethics.net, 2012, Focus No. 5.

³⁶ Solum, L. B., *The Aretaic Turn in Constitutional Theory*. Op. cit.

approaches to morality, epistemology, and jurisprudence a virtuous moral actor, believer, or judge can provide the guidance necessary for action, belief formation, or the decision of legal disputes.

Virtue Ethics has a number of applications, especially within the field of Social Ethics. According to Deirdre McCloskey virtue ethics can provide a basis for a balanced approach to understanding capitalism and capitalist societies (Business sector)³⁷. In Philosophy of Education, it can provide a foundational ground for peace education³⁸. Even to check-mate corruption (known as Whistle blowing) in the healthcare setting would be more respected within clinical governance pathways if it had a firmer academic foundation in Virtue Ethics³⁹. In fact, it has been argued that Whistle blowing should have been expressly supported in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights⁴⁰. Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen have employed virtue theory in theorising the capability approach to international development.

There are other good reasons that could warrant the application of aretaic theory in professional ethics. In the last decade there have arisen some worrying concerns about principle-based ethics. Principles are deemed to be too abstract, too remote and askance from the contextual and experiential complexity of professional decision-making. They appear too conducive to an overtly rationalistic, quasi-legalistic ethics and this tries to subvert compassion and moral creativity. Again, *prima facie* principles should be embedded in some more fundamental philosophical system to give them the normative weight they must carry. Such a foundation is needed to resolve conflict between and among principles in more than a pragmatic and functional way.

Furthermore, the moral life is a life peculiar to the humankind. Thus, there is today an increasing insistence that moral agents, (persons acting), cannot be left out of moral judgments. The way principles, rules, caring, hermeneutics, casuistry or any other alternative theory of ethics are conducted

³⁷ McClosky, D., *The Bourgeois Virtues: Ethics for an Age of Commerce*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.

³⁸ Page, J. S., *Peace Education: Exploring Ethical and Philosophical Foundations*. Charlotte: Information Age Publishing, 2008.

³⁹ Faunce, T.A., & Jefferys, S., *Whistle blowing and Scientific Misconduct: Renewing Legal and Virtue Ethics*.

Foundations Journal of Medicine and Law, 2007, 26 (3), pp. 567-84. (Cf., Faunce, T.A., *Developing and Teaching the Virtue-Ethics Foundations of Healthcare Whistle Blowing*. *Monash Bioethics Review*, 2004; 23(4), pp. 41-55).

⁴⁰ Faunce, T.A., & Nasu, H., *Normative Foundations of Technology Transfer and Transnational Benefit Principles, in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights*. *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 2009, (0) 1 – 26.

will depend on the kind of persons carrying out moral acts and their analyses⁴¹. This contention has been a fact in both general and medical ethics even in this period of its most radical change. Intention, moral psychology, and the history/story of the agent's life cannot be separated from the agent's moral behaviour. To avoid looking at virtue and intentions and to assume that the only justification for moral acts lies in principles, rules, or maxims is thought by many to favour the right over the good. Finally, the rediscovery of Aristotelian virtue theory in the works of some influential ethicists provides the stimulus for the reawakening of interest in virtue theory⁴². Consequently, there is the classical insistence on the virtues as excellences.

Application of Aretaic Ethics to the Nigerian Nation

Virtue Ethics deals with a person's virtues and how he or she uses them in making the lives of other people better. If a person has virtues, he or she can act morally and will be able to treat others with respect, compassion and love. These virtues prompt a person to do good things to others because these are innate in him or her, as opposed to deontology which forces people to do good deeds out of duty.

When the acting persons possess virtues such as generosity, honesty, compassion, friendliness, etc., and practice them in their daily living, such persons will become better individuals and better members of society who are willing to help other people. They will not be selfish, rather they will think of others first over personal interest. This character enhances Sense of Community and solidarity which are attributes of the common good principle.

Virtue Ethics therefore motivates individuals to have high regard to personal relationships. It encourages people to be sensitive of others and take care of other people. It is this altruistic and patriotic spirit that is required in rebuilding the Nigerian society. The inculcation of aretaic ethics is the primary and fundamental prerequisite to curb the tears and fears of the Nigerian nation.

According to Tacitus, people can be easily corrupted with power and luxury which can impede liberty. Aretaic Ethics serves as a shield against polluting the minds of individuals and making them bad people. Aretaic approach makes it possible for an individual to preserve and make better the life he or she already has and enjoy it rather than dream of a life with luxury and power. This is what Nigeria and Africa need.

⁴¹ Ibe, A.C., *Virtue Ethics: The Recourse to the Problem of Rectitude and Civility in Africa*. Op. cit., p. 24.

⁴² Clouser, K.D. & Gert, B., *A Critique of Principlism*, in *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 1990, 15, pp.

219-236, in Sgreccia, E., Mele, V. & Miranda, G., *Le radici della bioetica*.

Aretaic ethics is Agent-Based and Exemplarist Virtue Ethics. It points to an act that the prudent person characteristically would not do, or would feel guilty if he did, an act that expresses a vice, an act that is against a requirement of virtue. Aretaic ethics disposes one to decipher whether this is the sort of action a virtuously motivated agent would perform in a given situation. According to the exemplarist account, as we observe the people around us, we find ourselves wanting to be like some of them (in at least some respects) and not wanting to be like others. The former provides us with positive **exemplars** and the latter with negative ones. Our understanding of better and worse motivations and virtuous and vicious dispositions is grounded in these primitive responses to exemplars. Over time, our moral concepts become more refined as we encounter a wider variety of exemplars and begin to draw systematic connections between them, noting what they have in common, how they differ, and which of these commonalities and differences matter, morally speaking. Recognizable motivational profiles emerge and come to be labeled as virtues or vices, and these, in turn, shape our understanding of the obligations we have and the ends we should pursue⁴³. Such exemplary motivations are what Nigeria and her citizens need to move on.

Virtue ethics is Target-Centered. A virtue's target is that at which it is aimed. Courage aims to control fear and handle danger, while generosity aims to share time, talents, or possessions with others in ways that benefit them. A virtue, on a target-centered account "is a disposition to respond to, or acknowledge items within its field or fields in an excellent or good enough way"⁴⁴. A virtuous act is an act that hits the target of a virtue, which is to say that it succeeds in responding to items in its field in the specified way. Providing a target-centered definition of a *right action* is what Nigeria and her professionals require in rebuilding her national triumph.

Aretaic ethics requires "Good Agency in the truest and fullest sense to contemplate the "Good" as against self-interest. Thus Iris Murdoch argued that "in the moral life the enemy is the fat relentless ego." Constantly attending to our needs, our desires, our passions, and our thoughts skews our perspective on what the world is actually like and blinds us to the goods around us⁴⁵. Contemplating the goodness of something we encounter – which is to say, carefully attending to it "for its own sake, in order to understand it", breaks

⁴³ Zagzebski, L., *Divine Motivation Theory*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 53, 2004; "Exemplarist Virtue Theory", *Metaphilosophy*, 2010, 41(1/2): 41–57.

⁴⁴ Swanton, C., *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

⁴⁵ Murdoch, I., *The Sovereignty of Good*. London: Routledge. 1971:51.

this natural tendency by drawing our attention away from ourselves⁴⁶. Contemplating such goodness with regularity makes room for new habits of thought that focus more readily and more honestly on things other than the self. It alters the quality of our consciousness. And “anything which alters consciousness in the direction of unselfishness, objectivity, and realism is to be connected with virtue”⁴⁷. The virtues get defined, then, in terms of qualities that help one “pierce the veil of selfish consciousness and join the world as it really is”. And good agency is defined by the possession and exercise of such virtues. This goodness which is possible for creatures like us humans is the answer to the question of what one should do or how one should live in the human society like Nigeria.

Aretaic ethics makes it possible for people to become better persons. Aretaic ethics embraces diverse virtues which are important to live in harmony with other people. It is a broad and holistic approach that it considers the totality of a person, including the skills, character traits and emotions. Another powerful attribute of Aretaic ethics is its centeredness or focus on the character of the moral agent and not concerned on consequence and duty. This attribute makes it possible for the individual to fix on his or her moral values and not just simply following the law.

Nigeria and the human society need more than duty and law. Every human society needs to guarantee within it a moral base. Without that it cannot stand as a society because there is a saying that: *Non omne quod licet honestum est* (Not all that is legal is true)⁴⁸. What a society needs to stand is not only obedience to the law. It needs also compassion, disposition to sacrifice beyond the stipulated or defined obligations/duty. In one word, the virtue which cannot be imposed by the law can only be cultivated or prescribed on the basis of Aretaic Normative. This disposition to sacrifice otherwise known as the patriotic spirit which Aretaic Ethics can guarantee is what Nigeria and her citizens require for rebuilding her glory.

The spirit of self-sacrifice in Aretaic Ethics, that is, the search for good life and happiness permits one to posit to oneself the fundamental ethical questions: “Is my life good”? What type of person do I want to be? What type of person can I be? What type person should I be? It is a question of the telos/sense of my own life in relationship with my other similars – human persons, with biotic environment and with the ultimate Being. The same question could be asked in the plural: “Is our society good?” What type of society do we want to be? What type of society can we be or must we be? We

⁴⁶ Chappell, T., *Knowing What to Do*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014: 300.

⁴⁷ Murdoch, T., *The Sovereignty of Good*. London: Routledge, 1971:82.

⁴⁸ *Digesto*, L, XVII, 144.

can also further ask: What type of society will ours be if we admit, encourage or prohibit this or that behaviour? This self-introspection is only possible with Aretaic Ethics. And it is a timely question for Nigeria and her citizens.

Conclusion

The man and woman of today consider an action and the outcome of an action without considering the morality of the actor. This work proposes and upholds the prominence of and the “indispensability of Aretaic Ethics in inter-relationship with other theories”. For Aretaic Ethics, the character of the agent should be considered as *primus inter pares* in relationship to principles, rules and duties.

The last decade has seen an increase in the amount of attention Aretaic Ethics has received⁴⁹. There is now a growing movement towards virtues education, amongst both academics and teachers in the classroom⁵⁰. It is interesting to know that moral education in this area is all inclusive with other academic disciplines, (psychology, educational theory, theology), etc⁵¹. Modern Aretaic Ethics has always emphasized the importance of moral education, as not just the inculcation of rules but as the training of character. Aretaic Ethics can provide an opening to a holistic “human formation”.

One of the more productive developments of Virtue Ethics has come through the study of particular virtues and vices. There are now a number of careful studies of the cardinal virtues and other social virtues which were as such not emphasized earlier: honesty, civility, decency, truthfulness, ambition, and meekness⁵². Accordingly, capital vices such as envy, gluttony, greed or avarice, lust, pride, sloth, and wrath are discussed in virtue ethics theory today. These discussions in relation to professional ethics offer the possibility of some agreement on a telos (i.e., an end and a good). They open up the possibility for restoration of virtue-based ethics among professionals. In a healing relationship, for instance, between a health care professional and a patient, the primary end must be the good of the patient. The healing relationship, itself, therefore provides a phenomenological grounding for

⁴⁹ Annas, J., “Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing”, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association*, Presidential Address, 2004, 78 (2): 61–75; “Applying Virtue to Ethics”, *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 2015, 32 (1): 1–14.

⁵⁰ Curren, R., “Virtue Ethics and Moral Education”, in Besser-Jones and Slote 2015, pp. 459–470; Carr, D., & Steutel, J., (eds.), *Virtue Ethics and Moral Education*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

⁵¹ Cline, E., *Families of Virtue: Confucian and Western Views on Childhood Development*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

⁵² Timpe, K., & Craig, B., (eds.), *Virtues and Their Vices*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

professional ethics that applies to all healers by virtue of the kind of activity healing entails. Again in business ethics, a virtuous market participant would argue that mutual benefit is not just a fortunate by-product of the individual pursuit of self-interest. In this case, one intends that business transactions with others would be mutually beneficial. Thus the *raison d'être* (the *telos*) of market exchange is the expectation of mutual gains/benefit⁵³.

In the area of politics, Aristotle affirms that human beings are in essence “political animals”. In politics, justice combines the good, the right and the useful. Thus Aristotle asserted that, “the end or good in politics is justice⁵⁴ and the common good⁵⁵, as the true good. These virtues make ethical inquiry fruitful and relevant. In common good, questions of justice, fairness, solidarity and subsidiarity that enhance social living can be answered. This provides the end of human acts. It is only this that can give meaning and purpose (*telos*) to human person; enhance his good life and happiness which is the end of ethics. And this is only possible through the virtuous acting agent (Aretaic Return).

The virtuous person can err sometimes and the vicious person can exhibit one good act occasionally. This is a corroboration of the Aristotelian saying that “virtue lies in our power to act and similarly so does vice. Because where it is in our power to act it is also in our power not to act. Habitually, however, if the acting agent is virtuous, his/her actions would be virtuous. With this attestation, there is the obvious need for a return to Aretaic Ethics. It meets the requirements as the remedy to the fears and tears of Nigeria as a nation. It is the way forward to enhance rectitude and civility in Nigeria, Africa and beyond. It is the model for restoring to Nigeria and her citizens its wasted triumph as the Africa’s giant nation. Aretaic Ethics is our take if we hope for a nation where each human person will be respected in his/her dignity as a person, valued in his/her possible good, where each one can contribute in the promotion of human liberty, justice and peace, in oneself, in the institutions where one works, in the country where one lives and in the world at large.

⁵³ Ibe, A.C., *Virtue Ethics: The Recourse to the Problem of Rectitude and Civility in Africa*. Uzopietro Publishing Company, Owerri Nigeria, 2017, pp. 96-97; Buchanan, J. M., & Tullock, G, *The Calculus of Consent*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 1962, p. 103.

⁵⁴ Even though he limited Justice as equal shares for equals”

⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, III.12, 1282b17. Cf., Simpson, P.L.P., *The Politics of Aristotle: Translation, Analysis, and Notes*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1997.