

THE NEED FOR VIRTUE IN THE AFRICAN SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The survival of every given society depends to a large extent, on the underlying values and philosophy which such a society in question holds dear for her common good. The African continent in this paper is accepted as a continent full of both human and natural resources, with an amazing potential to be greater. No man or society can survive by only the mere possession of natural and material potentials. This paper is a discourse on the importance of 'virtue' as an essential tool which could enhance the socio-political and economic growth of the continent. Virtue, which is an embodiment of behavior and attitude in conformity with moral standards is discussed here as a strong pedestal on which the African society could be reengineered. With the high spate of corruption, moral decadence and laxity in the exercise of public and even private duties, it is then obvious that the reinvigoration of virtue, as a catalyst to private and public growth is of course timely. With a good understanding and practicality of virtue, Africans would be repositioned to work towards their collective good and development, to enable them be at par with other continents which are ahead of Africa economically and politically. Since virtue is usually regarded as a relative phenomenon, the present work proffers for it within the Kantian theory: Categorical Imperative.

Keywords: Virtue, Development, Morality, Good Reason, Leadership, Africa, End.

Introduction

Africa is a continent of vast contradictions. The continent is endowed with immense potentials ranging from natural resources to rich human and material wealth. Africa has also been a victim of social injustice from the West, especially with reference to slavery and colonialism. With the abundant wealth on the continent, one expects that Africa by now ought to have been one of the leading global economies. Having suffered injustice and suppression for centuries in the hands of the West, it is expected that this collective humiliation should have triggered a sense of unity, purpose and of course virtue in the psyche of the people, for a common good. It is disheartening that a lot of self-inflicted social anomalies have pervaded the continent so much that its development in congruence with that of other continents seems to be a mirage.

The present work is of the perspective that Africa of today needs to imbibe virtue in order to reposition itself on the part of development. The paper insists that most of the problems militating

against the development of the continent are avoidable problems which are grounded on the lack of virtue. Morality, which is good character is an essential part of human being and the lack of virtue renders man selfish, callous and indifferent to the good of others. The need for virtue is therefore essential in the African public morality, in order to make a sustainable shift from the status quo. Virtue in this sense is not intended to mean a relative or personal rationalization of what is good or bad. It is rather to be imbibed from the Kantian Categorical Imperative as he espoused in *The Critique of Practical Reason*, in which he holds that human conscience commands us unconditionally to always do the right thing and avoid the wrong one. On that note, virtue is attributed to conscience and man cannot pretend that he is conscienceless, since such a contradictory claim would also render the life of the claimant meaningless, irresponsible and illogical. He who claims that he is devoid of conscience is indirectly affirming that he is unworthy of humanity. It is with this conception of morality can Africans understand that there are moral facts they must engage for their common good, independent of what anyone feels or believes as an individual.

The paper is divided into two parts. Part one deals with the notion of moral theory, morality and the object of virtue. The importance of this exposition is to emphasize the importance of virtue in human life and why the lack of it eventually distorts human nature and its logical correlation with under development in Africa. In this part, moral theory is understood as a discourse on good character which is necessary for our relationship with others and a vital ingredient if we are to succeed as public actors. It goes on to describe the characteristics of morality which among others includes the fact that it is binding on all the concerned parties. It is not optional, otherwise it can no longer be binding and it is an end unto itself since man by nature is a moral being. The work goes on to explicate the importance of virtue which is moral excellence and a positive trait which is generally accepted as morally good.

Part two of the work takes a look at development in Africa. It accepts that African is developmentally backward and requires the adoption of virtue as a foundation for its socio-political and economic re-engineering. The work here insists that since nobody can give what he has not, it is only a virtues leader or bureaucrat who can have the moral will to do the right thing in the discharge of his or her duties. It is only when African leaders resolve to abide by the ethos of public morality shall the continent be on the part of meaningful development. The question of political instability is also attributed to lack of virtue of the power brokers and the elite, who are either fond of truncating the democratic process to suit their becks and calls in order to perpetuate themselves into power at all cost. Corruption is also attributed to the same lack of virtue. The work eventually ends with a conclusion which is a recap of the salient points and recommendations made.

PART ONE

1.1: The Notion of Moral Theory

Moral theory is a discourse on good character in general, why it is desirable and why good character itself ought to be eventually an integral part of moral theory. In the Ancient world, especially among the Greeks, the medieval scholars and early modern thinkers, rules and of course obligations were not necessarily objects of study. In fact, they rather preferred to study “virtue”, considering the fact that what a person ought to be is superior and more desirable than the obligations one has in the society. Hence: “But again, a high value must be set also upon truth” (Plato, 1997: 75). In one of Plato’s dialogues, Meno confronted Socrates with the hard question of whether virtue could be taught. It needs to be recalled that in the epoch of Plato (428 – 348 B.C) when this pertinent intellectual inquiry was posed by Meno, Greece was in landmark period of political, social and cultural change.

Hence: “During the second half of the Fifth Century B.C. Athens underwent profound social and political changes, the most dramatic being the on-swell of democratic sentiments and practices. Democracy had been solely developing in Athens ever since the reforms instituted by Solon in the early Sixth Century B.C. and, then, by Cleisthenes nearly a century later” (Rapple A. Brendan, 1993 “The Early Greek Sophists: Creators of the Liberal Curriculum” in *Journal of Thought*, p. 63). It is a general phenomenon that whenever there is the need for a meaningful generational change the beneficiaries of the old order would usually be resistant to the change. In this period in Greece, individualism, skepticism, cynicism and moral relativism seemed to be the dominant thought pattern as perpetuated by the group of itinerant thinkers and teachers called the *Sophists*. The Sophists condemned the ancient cherished values of the Greeks like moderation, courage and justice and introduced their typology of teaching which were at disjoint with objective moral values.

In the Athenian education typical of the Sophists’ Age, it needs to be emphasized that rhetoric was at its peak because not only was it important, it characterized “the art of eloquent and persuasive speech which the Sophists professed to teach” (Ibid: 64). In his bid to establishing a moral standard which transcends individual preferences, the Sophists were countered by Plato who “sets himself the task of opposing such dangerous doctrines. Virtue, Plato believed, is real and not just a social convention. It is not only real but the most important object of our investigation, for virtue is the foundation of the good life and the just society” (Ellin, 1995: pp. 1 – 2). The central argument of Plato in this dialogue is premised on the fact that Socrates who is the mouthpiece of the platonic dialogue is arguing that the pursuit of virtue is more desirable than the quest for socio-political prominence, class consciousness and wealth. Virtue is therefore the most superior of all other goods.

To make the subject matter clearer, it needs to be stated that: “Moral theory studies morality. Virtue is part of morality, so the study of virtue is part of moral theory” (Ibid: 3). Ethics on the other hand

is a branch of philosophy. It needs to be noted that the object of thought in didactic ethics is equally moral theory. The word “ethics” and “morality” are English synonyms, though with different contextual meanings. However, to say that the study of virtue is part of moral theory, since virtue is part of morality, does not mean that the study of virtue makes an individual an automatic good person. To study virtue is equivalent to the awakening of human conscience, of reminding man of what he already possesses, of which only the individual is in the position to act in accord with it or no. Ellin (1995) states that while morality is equivalent to ethical standards in the personal or social context, ethics on the other hand is inclined to ethical standard with reference to professional or commercial perspective. A typical example of the contextual difference in meaning between morality and ethics is evidenced in the fact that while a liar could be said to be immoral, a lawyer on the other could said to be unethical if he lies. In philosophy in general, both terms are interchangeably used.

Without doubt, moral theory studies morality or put differently, the subject which studies ethics or morality is otherwise called moral or ethical theory. While it is obvious that morality is not a materially demonstrable reality which could be attested in mathematical terms, it is notwithstanding obvious that morality is equally a reality. It is the most evident reality in human relationship since it cuts across all human activities. Man cannot do without morality because it is the yardstick of interpersonal relationship. The golden rule: ‘do to others as you would like them to do unto you’ is the foundation of human conscience and the anchorage of social morality. It does not require an outside person to invoke it in the human conscience or in our privacy. Since every human being is conscious of how he is treated by others in the society, a situation responsible for how he behaves as well, it is then obvious that morality is basically a reality.

1:2: The Characteristics of Morality

- **Binding on the Parties**

Morality, from the Kantian Categorical Imperative point of view is by its nature binding on the parties involved and therefore not relative. It appeals to human conscience and is neither selective nor discriminatory. It is not an individual preference which is to be manipulated at will. It is therefore a rule and a principle which guide the actions of the obligated actors. If morality were not a rule or set of rules, it could not have been said to be binding. It is only when morality is binding can public philosophy complements public good. In this vein, the obligatory nature of morality justifies a compelling normative concern, which is necessary for the justification of commonwealth and the projection of common good.

When morality is binding, it overlaps the odds inherent in the private/individualist philosophy of unrestrained liberalism which places private interest over and above public good. Therefore: “when religious symbols are more and more co-opted by ultraconservatives and the philosophy of liberalism seems less adequate as a guide to our public or private lives, a revival of public philosophy seems urgently needed” (Bellah& Hammond, 1980: p. xiv). The binding nature of morality leads to mores which are those norms or institutions which are usually in any case,

morally sanctioned. The essence of morality often underpins conformity “and failure to conform elicits moral disapproval...Examples are readily available: thou shall not kill, thou shall not steal, thou shall love thy father and mother. Mores are looked upon as essential to the well being of the group. (Chinoy, 1967: 30). Morality is therefore binding because by so doing, it becomes a responsibility on the part of all the actors.

- **Not Necessarily Discretionary**

Morality is not a personal commodity at the discretion of the owner. In this vein, “Morality in an important sense is not voluntary. You can’t just choose your moral principles” (Ellin, 1995: 5). In a situation whereby morality is optional, people might deliberately decide to kill or steal simply to satisfy their selfish desire. To make morality optional is an indirect way of making moral principles vulnerable to abuse. In any case, we should not undermine the fact that some people have deliberately developed some strong personal moral principles as an addendum to the already existing human morality. A typical example here is with people who embark on charity or even voluntary workers who believe in the dictum of ‘live and let live’.

From the religious point of view, there is the belief that there exists supra-temporal Being who created man and expects him to behave in certain ways. In such a circumstance, such believes could develop a kind of morality in accordance with the demands and expectation of God. In the Christian credo for instance man is perceived as an image of God. This belief system can easily affect the morality of a good Christian who might like to adopt ulterior moral practices like helping the poor and needy in line with his faith. This kind of practice is in harmony with altruism as a public virtue.

In fact, Freire (1970) refers to Brazil as a typical example of a responsible development in relation to the organized poor. The Brazilian poor in the 1940’s were affected by the act of evangelism which was spearheaded by the returnee exiled French students and young workers. In the process of this exercise, a good sense of *conscientization* was aroused among the people, leading not only to political awareness, but equally enabled many families in the north east Brazil to learn how to read and write. By so doing, the villagers used biblical points of view to organize social change which affected their socio-economic conditions. This is a typical example of how religious belief could lead to voluntary morality, for the satisfaction of individual conscience and the good of others.

- **Absence of a Written Rule or Law Book**

Unlike so many fields of human endeavors with written rules and regulations, morality on the other hand is not a written law book or an encyclopedia of dos’ and don’ts. Morality is a standard rule which exists independent of our relativistic tendencies. “This does not mean that morality does not change; in some sense, morality may change, as many people think. But it does mean that change in morality does not occur by explicit human decision. No person or group of people can change

morality just by deciding to do so". (Ellin, 1995: 5). Every conscientious being is in one way or the other aware of the moral principles which govern human life. Man cannot deny this reality because to do so is contradictory, thereby rendering man subhuman.

- **Non Dependence on Our Thinking**

Often, people conclude in the socio-political sphere that majority is right or in some cases that the will of the majority overrides that of the minority. A typical example is in government circles whereby parliamentary decision is usually based on majority rule, in line with the specific provision of the prevalent constitution. Morality on the other hand does not depend on what we think or the resolution of the majority. It does not necessarily mean that majority is always right. The question of morality therefore is not a question of our appraisals based on number, after all, minority could be right but is not allowed by circumstances to uphold. In fact, morality is not even dependent on unanimity "because there is no moral principle that is endorsed by absolutely everyone, and no single person in the whole world has the right to veto a moral principle" (Ibid: 5-6). Moral principles therefore exist independent of our narrow thinking and peripheral rationalizations.

- **Morality as an End**

Evidently, the primary purpose of morality is nothing but morality itself, since it serves no other purpose than to position man as a moral being which he is. Man naturally ought to be moral because by so doing he lives in conformity with his nature as an interdependent being whose life and survival is as a result of his relationship with other moral agents. Man then ought to be moral and nothing short of that. Morality then exists so that man can be the best moral being which he ought to. Man in this regard should be treated morally because "Our treatment of *anything* must depend, in the last resort, on what we think, it is: for instance, we treat people one way and cats another, because of our idea of what a man is and what a cat is" (Sheed, 1960: 1). If morality weren't an end, man could not have been a moral entity. To be moral however may serve other end, but these other ends in question are not necessarily the justification for one to be moral.

- **Good Reason as the Undertone of Moral Discourse**

There is the law of causality in both the material and spiritual realm. The question of morality is not left out as Ellin (1995) remarks, that moral deliberation is premised on finding good reasons to justify one's decisions. By the same token, moral debate is based on the need to present good and worthy arguments for the justification of one's moral views. Since morality is not a compendium of written rules, it does not however rule out the need to develop intelligent discussion on moral issues. If one for instance has no good and dependable reasons for his moral opinion and standpoint, there should be no reason actually to expect others to believe same. One is even morally bound not to hold such belief if he has no reason for holding it. A morally opinion without reason is as good as a mere illogical utterance. We cannot pretend that there are no valid answers to moral questions. Man does not find it difficult to differentiate between good and bad

action. When we are acting morally, our conscience obviously tells us and when our moral essence is abused or violated by others, considering the morality of our being, we also know and this is the rationale behind morality based on categorical imperative.

1: 3: Virtue

Every field of thought has its object of study. As has been mentioned earlier, the object of inquiry of moral theory is morality. Suffice it to say that the fundamental object of investigation of moral theory is the search for truth. Moral theory is therefore aimed at the discovery of the truth in relation to its subject which is actually morality, though morality is not studied solely by moral theory. The truth of the matter is that other areas of intellectual investigation like psychology, sociology, literature and even religion, etc cover moral questions as well. While all these areas of humanity treat different aspects of morality, they differ however from moral theory as an object of thought.

The term virtue is of Greek origin meaning *arete* and consequently interpreted in Latin as *virtus*. Virtue means moral excellence and a virtue is a quality or positive trait which is accepted as morally good. Furthermore, virtue is considered as the foundation of moral principle and equally good moral being. Virtue is synonymous with good and even personal virtues are qualities valued and characteristics which are valued as promoting both individual and collective good. The opposite of virtue then is vice. The important question remains whether virtue could be taught. The rationale behind this is that to be moral requires something which is not knowledge per se, but a desire. When the desire to be moral is on top, it becomes easy for one to be moral without any knowledge of moral theory, but if the desire is absent, one can learn everything possible about moral theory but without obviously acquiring it. An unrepentant murderer for instance can study everything about morality and remains his old self, in so far as he lacks the will to be moral.

The issue here is that if virtue is actually knowledge, how do we discover and teach it, in order to achieve the formation of moral people and a virtuous society. Socrates (470-399 B.C) tried to tackle the question. In an attempt to explain the nature of virtue Socrates implies virtue as a kind of knowledge, and never explained well that morality is a kind of knowledge. The major problem with the Socratic explanation is that he was keen on finding definitions and in the process he could not distinguish well enough the type of knowledge which one eventually acquires when he seeks for definition and logical arguments and the type of knowledge which one needs in order to be master of a particular craft or skill. Socrates does not feel that you become a mechanic for instance by learning how to define wheel and engine, but from all indications he feels that to become a moral person, you can achieve that by learning how to define “virtue” and “justice”. This accounts for why in the *Republic* Plato says that only philosophers can be actually moral.

In any case, Plato’s student Aristotle (384-322 B.C) however later gave an extensive and detailed insight on the concept of virtue. In fact, unlike Socrates and Plato, Aristotle gave a better and more

acceptable version of Virtue. “At the beginning of Book III of the *Politics* Aristotle had discussed the virtue of a good man and the virtue of a citizen and had treated their non identity as a problem” (Sabine & Thorson, 1973: 110). In fact, it was left for Aristotle to “to make clear what both Socrates and Plato had noticed but insufficiently understood, that morality is not a kind of theoretical knowledge but a kind of practical knowledge, a skill employing knowledge of facts and principles” (Ellin, 1995: 11). The knowledge of an artisan or a technician is different, since it has to do mainly with the factual knowledge of materials and tools. In this vein, a learner acquires this type of knowledge or skill from one who already possesses such knowledge, coupled with practice and imitation.

In answer, virtue for Aristotle: “is the skill of knowing how to live well, based on knowledge of the material of human nature. You acquire this skill from someone who knows it, again partly by instruction, partly by imitation and practice” (Ibid: 11). The central argument by Aristotle is that virtue does not come on a platter of gold. While a mechanic for instance may decide not to work or work in a good or bad manner, virtue on the other hand is an object of desire to do the right thing. Aristotle therefore insists that a virtuous person must be in position to will his action and be disposed to will it for its own sake. In fact, virtue must be in conformity with right desire. Furthermore: “The virtuous person wants to help other people in need, wants to be honest and truthful, wants to be kind rather than cruel, and so on. One can make the argument (as Aristotle does) that unless you know how to do these things, you will not succeed in being virtuous no matter how much you may want to” (Ibid: 11-12). Teaching is therefore not enough to enable one to be virtuous and even skill is not necessarily a pre-requisite to virtue, for virtue needs to be desired and manifested.

The ongoing discourse is a corroboration of the fact that for Aristotle ethics in general is not a mere theoretical study. He emphasizes strongly that virtues of character are dispositions to act and react in particular ways, in relationship with certain circumstances. The habit of behaving in certain manners is important and as a result a good behavior is a product of habits which in actual sense can be acquired through practice and corrections. Thus, ethics in this manner becomes a practical field. To achieve virtue, Aristotle introduced the notion of mean which is the intermediate state between the opposed vices of excess and deficiency. The point here is that the idea of both too much and too little is in every circumstance obviously wrong. Hence, a virtuous or right action is that action which is evident in the mean.

Aristotle outlines the major virtues which include courage, temperance and magnanimity. Courage as a virtue is for instance the mean which exists between excess of rashness and the deficiency of cowardice. For the sake of pleasure in another instance, temperance comes in as a mean between the excessiveness of intemperance and basically the deficiency of insensibility. In the case of money spending, generosity is the mean between extravagance and stinginess. While humility is the mean between pride and ignorance, communalism on the other way round is the mean between

individualism and collectivism. In the same way, magnanimity is actually the mean between the exaggeration/excesses of vanity and the deficiency of pusillanimity. The application of the theory of virtue therefore requires a good sense of flexibility, depending on the circumstance and context in question.

PART TWO

2: 1: Development

The word ‘development’ is a multi-dimensional term which is used in different camps of human life. Generally, it is the process of a thing, action, activity or life to be developing or even being developed. *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* defines development as: “The general growth of something so that it becomes more advanced, stronger, etc: a baby’s development in the womb, the development of basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, career development”. Furthermore, *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* goes on to extend the definition of development as: “the process of producing or creating something new or more advanced; a new or advanced product: the development of vaccines against tropical diseases, development in aviation technology. This piece of equipment is an exciting new development”. From all the definitions above, it is quite clear that development is a change, process or positional shift from one stage to a better or superior one.

While the term ‘development’ could as well mean a new change or event which is quite likely to affect or have impact on a continuing situation, it is still obvious that we usually deploy the term in line with expectation and growth. Chukwu (2014) defines human development for instance as the totality of the bodily and spiritual wellbeing of man in line with his being as an entity consisting of body and soul. Human development in this regard is seen as a holistic development of man, putting into consideration his fundamental being as a person. Human development upholds man as a subject whose material and spiritual dimensions are seen as two entities in one, which are distinct but not separated.

In a nutshell: “Development then is a concrete term that is man-oriented or people oriented; it is not an empty expression in so far as it is geared towards the actualization of the end which is man. ...The nexus of spiritual and bodily growth of man implies that man is in continuous need of both the material elements like: food, water, shelter and other immaterial entities like education, faith, spiritual meditation and love...” (Chukwu Ezechi, “Healthcare in Edeh and Human Development” in *Saviourite Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 2014: 12). Development cannot be talked of man, if it does not put into account both the seen and unseen aspects of man as a temporal being who is endowed with a supra temporal inclination. Man has the natural tendency to grow and develop the society and his environment. To say that man is a development inclined being is not an exaggeration, since man is the only temporal being, who has the capacity to develop his surrounding and the society.

From the social point of view, development is synonymous with health, because a healthy society must be operating in line with development indices. In 1946, the World Health Organization (WHO) emphasized that health is actually the state of a comprehensive physical, mental and equally social wellbeing and not necessarily the absence of disease and infirmity. Hence: “Human development is never an act in isolation. Human development involves the efforts of man as the subject of development, family and social institutions for the common good. Human development requires the spirit of oneness based on relationship, brotherhood, understanding, altruism, dialogue and corporation” (Chukwu, 2014: 13). Social wellbeing is vital because it places development in a broader context.

2: 2: Development in Africa

Africa is faced with huge developmental problems, ranging from the economic, political, infrastructural and social perspectives. Africa is the second largest continent in the world, coming second after Asia and endowed with enormous human and material resources. “The great continent is blessed with a series of major rivers whose meandering courses through much of their long passes occasionally spread out into broad, shallow basins that once held inland seas....a considerable means of internal transportation and communication is provided through these river systems of Africa” (Edeh, 1985: 5). Africa is also said to have been sustaining human life for Ages, a situation whereby one could say that going by the fact that the continent has been in contact with human life for a long time, the continent ought to have advanced better, socio-economically.

The retardation in the development of Africa remains a puzzle for many thinkers, researchers and analysts because Africa is really blessed with abundant natural resources. In addition: “If we accept the most recent conclusions of many archaeologists, we can say that Africa is historically the most senior of the five continents in the world in the sense of sustaining human life. The archaeologists believe that man’s ancestors first became differentiated from primates in Africa.” (Ibid: 5). Citing Arthur N. Cook’s work: *Africa: Past and Present*, Edeh (1985) recalls that by the period agriculture was an organized system of life about seven thousand years ago, the major human races which live in the present Africa were already settled. Unfortunately, “At present, none of the African languages is satisfactory enough to be adopted as a continental language, rich enough for analytic philosophy and science. Most of the advanced countries of the world have succeeded in spreading their ideas and cultures, especially by means of their philosophy, science and religion to other parts of the world through their well developed languages” (Makinde, 2007: 16). The point is that lack of authentic unity and concrete roadmap for the integration and development of the continent seems to be far.

While other continents are busy building strong and robust institutions, some African countries on the other hand are personifying the public machinery, perpetuating the public institutions on the altar of nepotism, clandestine gratifications and monumental irregularities; all at the expense of the commonwealth. With this prevailing defective moral mentality and corrosive social mindset, it is difficult for the status quo to lead the continent to the desired developmental end. “Seen in this perspective, man is only slightly less stupid than the primates, only slightly more capable of ordering his affairs to the fulfillment of his own interests” (LaPiere, 1965: 104). Africa cannot develop at the desired pace since some of the conscienceless leaders prefer to use public fund to build paradise on earth for themselves.

The truth of the matter is that Africa today is the most backward of all the continents of the world, in terms of political stability and socio-economic advancement. The bitter truth is that Africa in these prevailing realities should make a dispassionate inward reflection on the way forward. A major step is to underscore virtue in the public life of the continent, since a fundamental cause of the backwardness is a moral issue. It is very difficult for the continent to be at par with other continents of the world if it fails to admit the level of moral decadence which has permeated the psyche of the continental social sphere. With the level of incessant ethnic clashes, war, bribery and corruption in both the private and public sectors across board, one makes bold to say that the socio-economic self dependence of Africans as a people is absolutely far-fetched. The concept of virtue therefore needs to be reinvigorated, so as to transcend the African public morality, as a means to development. Africa needs to moderate her excesses and work on her deficiencies, an act which is a cardinal demand of the Aristotelian definition of virtue. Consequently, the public morality must be Categorically Imperative on the part of all and sundry, since such a moral notion imposes objectivity and goes beyond individual self seeking interests and relativistic interpretations of value.

2: 3: The Need for Virtue in African Leadership

Leadership is very necessary for the survival of any group or nation. Where the leadership is impaired, the followership suffers because it is the leadership which illuminates the ways and means of the followership. A non conscientious leader cannot make a reasonable custodian of public mandate. Leadership is intertwined with virtue since it requires a good degree of morality to show a worthy leadership. Leadership in this sense requires from the Aristotelian perspective of virtue, men of practical conscience, moderation and justice; men who would embrace morality as a moral fact and would be willingly to arrive at it by putting aside selfish considerations and avoidable relativist interpretations.

In addition, it is therefore necessary that African leaders should morally out of good will arrive at the realm of the *Kantian Duty Ethics* for them to have a sense of responsibility. Kant believed that good will is essential in our ethical conduct and he defines will as: “the uniquely human ability to act in accordance with rules, laws, or principles, regardless of interests or consequences” (Thiroux, 1990: 62). Development on the other hand can also be achieved if leadership position in Africa is

occupied by men of virtue who would not like to abuse public morality. However, it is unfortunate that some African leaders are only bent on the accumulation of wealth and the perpetuation of themselves in office, even if it entails changing of the rules indiscriminately. Most African leaders refused to understand that leadership goes with responsibility. “Administration has a great deal in common with play-acting. The administrator, like the actor, has particular roles to play. His job is to know his lines and play them well, because the way that he plays them will determine his success with people” (Keith, 1962: 162). Role playing demands that analogically African leaders ought to interpret their leadership scripts practically well, by equally practically practicing the virtues of leadership which they profess often theoretically.

The sit-tight syndrome of public office holders in Africa has become so bizarre that the Western democracy which most parts of the continent has embraced for decades after their various independence has not earned the continent a commensurate dividend. In both principle and by their constitutions, almost all African countries have adopted democracy but in practice, what they practice is often a fusion of oligarchy with nepotism or *familocracy*. There is the need to understand that: “Leadership qualities, of course, are frequently involved in a man’s rising to a position of authority in an association....The exercise of authority need not involve a personal relationship of any kind” (Bierstedt, 1974: 341). A leader is a servant and representative of the people. His function ought to be service to the people and not a personal relationship based on his discretion. Leadership in Africa is really in need of virtue to enable the leaders develop “unselfish regard for the welfare of others” (Wispe, 1978: 304). As it is today, some African leaders have forgotten this important value of their status as agents, on the dispassionate vanguard of the public good. Without virtue, it is difficult to reposition African leadership in general, on the path of socio-economic greatness.

Morality is absolutely a vital component of leadership because a man bereft of virtue is not worthy of public confidence. Authority therefore cannot equally be appropriated to someone who puts himself first in terms of the good of the community. Thus: “Leadership in short, like competence, is a species of influence; authority is a function of power....from leadership we are prepared to indulge in statements of a more positive character” (Bierstedt: 341). Just as Ellin (1995) states, that good character is what everyman by nature ought to have, since it involves both the moral and mental qualities of man. Virtues are good traits because they are morally good and they include those qualities like: trustworthiness, fairness and love. Indifference and egotism on the other way round are vices and should be avoided by African leaders. Some African leaders forget that: “Discipline, readily interpreted as conformance with regulations, whatever the situation, is seen not as a measure designed for specific purposes but becomes an immediate value in the life-organization of the bureaucrat” (Merton, 1968: 252). If a bureaucrat or any leader is not morally conscious, as to live up to the virtuous demand of his office, all his pretentious effort to serve dutifully would be surely abortive, because his foundation is faulty.

Leadership often fails in Africa because government policies are sometimes built on “a premise of self-interest” (Neal, 1987: 45). Corruption is in a good number of African public institutions

because of the dominance of corrupt minded leadership in those places. Hence: “I see indiscipline as an uncontrolled, disordered behavior owing to a lack of good training of the mind, and corruption as an indisciplined act, nurtured by greed. If indiscipline is a cultural trait, then it signifies the trait of untrained minds in a culture, whether in a primitive or modern culture” (Makinde, 2007: 221). A trained mind does not necessarily mean a mind which is tutored in the four walls of an academic institution. The number of degrees or experience one has acquired in various areas of endeavour does not make a mind refined or worthy of emulation. A trained or disciplined mind is a mind which is radiated by the fragrance of virtue and aroma of love for the human society. Aristotelian perspective of virtue is important in African political life, just like the Kantian *Duty Ethics*. “This means that every time people are about to make a moral decision they must, according to Kant, ask first, What is the rule authorizing this act I am about to perform and can it become a universal rule for all human beings to follow?” (Thiroux, 1990: 63). Any leader who is short of such virtuous considerations and moral precepts ought not to have business with either governance or leadership as the case may be.

The spiritual aspect of human life is the seat of morality and he who undermines the role of virtue in leadership would be guided by mechanistic and anthropocentric impulses only. African leaders should wake up from their slumber by remembering the admonition of one of the leading Nigerian Nationalists who cautions that for a leader to be successful “he must possess comprehension, mental magnitude and spiritual depth” (Awolowo, 1966: 157-158). Basically, self discipline, dedication to duty, leadership by example and a good sense of virtue are not ruled out in this expectation. They all comprise ‘mental magnitude’ and ‘spiritual depth’ which Awolowo emphasized here and that is the means through which African leaders can act with virtue because: “Virtue provides reasons to act morally...One is that you should act morally because acting morally is what a virtuous person does: you cannot be a brave person without doing brave acts. The other is that acting morally, you develop good character, or retain the good character you already have” (Ellin, 1995: 189). By the same token, a person who is not brave, but has the intention to be brave must practically embark on brave acts, since he can never be brave by acting in a manner that is cowardly.

2: 4: Virtue as Antidote to Political Crises and Corruption in Africa

The great ancient Greek sage and foremost thinker Aristotle says that there is an effect to every cause. It is obvious that one of the greatest factors which militate against the development of African continent is political instability. It is very difficult for a nation to survive politically and economically if it is vitiated with unstable government. Over the years, a lot of African countries have witnessed a myriad of coup and counter coups. In other cases, ethnic clash and war have not only destabilized the corporate unity of some countries, but in the extreme, the continent has lost millions of souls all in the name of political upheaval. The principal architects of tensions conflicts and war in various African countries are often power maniacs and unpatriotic kleptomaniacs who see power and money as ends unto themselves. Sheed (1960) says that any unpatriotic man does

not love his country and he who does not have a genuine love for his country is actually a diminished man. In addition, such a person lacks virtue.

The Nigeria-Biafra war which took effect for almost half a century now is still a practical reminder, as the gory sight of that carnage still remains in the psyche of the Nigerian people. The genocide in Rwanda in the mid nineties is still very fresh in the mind of the world. The Sudanese crises, Somalia, Liberia and Congo, Ethiopia-Eritrea etc, coupled with the political break-up in some parts of North Africa are all self-evident of a continent in need of moral repair, since all these cases of blood-letting are willfully orchestrated by man, especially the power elite, either military or civilian. We cannot deny that these atrocities are willfully committed by man because “According to Piaget, actions performed by the subject constitute the substance or raw material of all intellectual and perceptual adaptation” (Flavell, 1964: 82). The African leaders must be held responsible for these acts of barbarism which exterminates the populace and retards development because: “the concept of intelligence as-action provides the connecting link or bridge between the successive developmental forms of intelligence” (Ibid: 83).

For crises and conflicts to end in Africa, virtue must take a central position in the heart of the people, especial the political class. Often, the democratic institutions are bastardized leading to political mayhem as a result of the attendant disagreements. The former Secretary-General of OAU who was also former Prime Minister of Togo gives an insight to the causes of political crises in Africa. Hence: “Such crises and tensions occur as a response to an internal logic related to the weakness of the democratic systems of the African States, the challenging of the electoral commissions and the power struggles within the political parties. These crises lead to tensions which may result in crises” (KodjoEdem, “Pan-Africanism: A Weapon Against Tensions, Crises and Conflicts” in *African Geopolitics*, 2013: 9). The effect of crisis in such a case is that it leads to sometimes armed rebellion against a State or military attack.

Corruption as has been said earlier seems to pose endemic problem in the African polity. Politicians, bureaucrats and government officials in general often embark on misappropriation and superfluous dispensation of public funds. Often, the monies which ought to have been used for infrastructural development and welfare services are either diverted by public office holders or in some cases are used on luxury. The problem cuts across board, affecting a lot of African States. In Nigeria, politicians often end their tenures as multi-millionaires. “A study of trade figures of fourteen francophone states in 1964 shows that the amount spent on importing alcoholic drinks was six times higher than that spent on importing fertilizer. Half as much was spent on perfume and cosmetic imports as on machine tools. Almost as much went importing petrol for privately owned cars as on the purchase of tractors” (Meredith, 2005: 171). In fact, in East Africa, the superfluous lifestyle of the *WaBenzi*, which is a description of the rich political class is not left out.

The anomaly continues as, “The blight of corruption, meanwhile, spread ever further, most notably in West Africa at first, then to other areas. In many parts of West Africa, there had been a long

tradition of ‘dash’ – of gift-giving for services rendered. The bigger the man, the bigger the ‘dash’ for the favour received. The ‘Big Man’ became an accepted feature of West African life” (Ibid: 172). Furthermore: “The practice of bribery and embezzlement spread from top to bottom, from politicians to tax collectors, customs officers, policemen, postal clerks and dispensary assistants. It affected everything from job applications to licenses, scholarships, foreign exchange and the location of factories” (Ibid: 173). The evidence abound that corruption and internal tensions and instability really vitiate development thrive in Africa. Kareem (2003) notes that corruption differs from one country to another and in Africa, illegal takeover of government, embezzlement of public fund, nepotism, looting, electoral malpractices, abuse of office and bribery are all common knowledge.

It is therefore necessary that the social morality of the African continent needs to be reviewed. The continent needs to embrace the spirit of virtue for the efficacious functionality of the public sphere. Without this, various political gladiators and social actors would continue to act in accord with selfishness and non-patriotic tendencies. In fact: “Democracy is more than a set of electoral arrangements and we would propose that the main democratic prop is the sense of restraint among the politically influential, that is, the elected politicians and the bureaucracy” (Jordan & Richardson, 1989: 28). Public servants and the political class in general should understand that they do have a social contract with the people and that bond needs not to be abused since: “A social contract is as much a matter of people’s attitudes as it is one of public policies. It is based on a shared identity, reciprocity, and sense of community” (Faux, Jeff, 1997 “You are not Alone” in Greenberg & Theda, editors, *The New Majority*, p. 32).

Conclusion

The main challenge of ethics is how to have the will to do the right thing in the absence of written laws and hard rules. Human behavior however is such that man cannot always live by written laws. In fact, virtue is part of what makes us human because our moral nature enables us to act rightly if we so desire, when no regulations are strictly defined. The bottom line of this paper is that no human being is complete without morals and if we resolve to act morally we will live in a happy and fulfilled world; especially when we act in harmony with how we expect others to act unto us. Irrespective of the colonial ghost and the scare of slavery which actually impaired the socio-economic and human good of the African continent, Africans have also failed in some instances. Africa needs not to continue apportioning blames on outsiders always, since part of the underdevelopment is caused by self-induced moral shortcomings.

When a problem is ethical or moral, then the actors in question have to embark on critical introspection. Africa should reason inwards because the colossal corruption, ethnic clash, bribery and lack of due process in our system are all practical evidence of conscienceless attitudes. They are acts which are at disjoint with virtue. Development cannot occur when we have willingly resolved to cut corners to the detriment of collective good. Development in Africa will continue to be elusive if mediocrity continues to have precedence over and above meritocracy. Development

in Africa is a foul cry if we refrain from building strong and objective institutions which would outlive and overlap self-serving inferences and preferences. Virtue is therefore very vital in the African polity today for both the development of the continent, in consonance with the present Age and also for the economic self reliance of the continent as an entity.

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