

## Virtues as Foundation of Morality for Society's Common Good

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**ABSTRACT:** Virtues are an important component of the moral compass in the society. The society cannot at any point in time fail to yearn for virtues since they define the progressive agenda that any human beings aspires to have. The paper focuses on how virtues are a basis of morality within the society by analyzing majorly St. Thomas Aquinas writings on virtues guided by Aristotle as the exponent of *Virtue Ethical Theory*. The point of concern is, what is this that informs the difference between the *is* and the *ought* and how can the society ensure that these two operate together for the wellbeing of the humanity in terms of realizing the common good? The paper uses the analytic approach in its assessment of the *Virtue Ethical System*. The result of the foregoing is that virtues could be said to be the mainstay of good governance that finally facilitates the realization of the common good. therefore, the society should be continuously involved in the process of inculcating virtues, which will secure its future.

**KEYWORDS:** Virtue, Morality, Common Good, Society.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

The paper intends to look into the subject of virtues as the foundation of morality for the achievement of the common good. The issue at hand is to question how the positive character traits facilitate morality which ultimately ensure that the welfare of the society is attained, protected and perpetuated. There are certain issues to be paid attention to such as: man is the moral agent in the society; morality as the foundation of good governance; and how good governance facilitates the realization of common good. There are also certain features which impact on the process of good governance that are to be considered herein. It is important to note that just as growth in virtue and morality or ethics is a process of both action and principle respectively, governance too is and both divides ought not to be confused or understood as events.

#### 1.0 Virtues as the Foundation of Morality

Man being the apex of creation, he is a rational being which can be in position of making free decision anchored in his responsibility and accountability. This makes man to grow progressively towards his destiny. Since this growth is a process that involves the individual and the society at large how does the individual acquire the power to make positive choices in his life? St. Thomas asserts that:

It can be proved in three ways that virtue belongs to a power of the soul. First from the notion of the very essence of virtue, which implies perfection of a power; for perfection is in that which is perfect. Secondly, from the fact that virtue is an operation habit, as stated in Q. 55, Art.2: therefore, all operation proceeds from the soul through a power. Thirdly, from the fact that virtue disposes to that which is best: for the best is the end, which is either a thing's operation, or something acquired by an operation proceeding from the thing's power. Therefore, a power of the soul is the subject of virtue.<sup>1</sup>

This manifest that, virtues flows from the soul of man as a power that guides man to choose or make choices in his life. Man makes this choice as he continues to live expressing his operations as a living being; in this sense we live righteously, inasmuch as by virtue we perform righteous actions. This is the first way of living while the other way of living is when man expresses himself in the very existence of the living thing; meaning the way man lives among other living beings. This kind of living belongs to the essence of the soul, which is the principle of existence in the living thing.

St. Thomas is expounding the fundamental fact that man's behaviour or character is a personal choice which comes from his freedom from within. This gives man the power to be responsible and accountable in his life. In addition, this freedom helps man to grow towards his destiny, because the righteousness which is acquired

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<sup>1</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*.

through virtuous living, always denotes order to a due end and to the Divine law. This is the rule of human will that is, always to move towards the good or to choose the good and is common in all virtues.

According to St. Thomas Aquinas', the subject of virtue is a power of the soul; He asserts that:

Hence, the subject of a habit which is called a virtue in a relative sense, can be the intellect, and not only the practical intellect but also the speculative, without any reference to the will: for thus the Philosopher (*Ethics*. vi.3) holds that science, wisdom and understanding, and also art, are intellectual virtues. But the subject of a habit which is called a virtue simply, can only be the will, or some power in so far as it is moved by the will. And the reason of this is, that the will moves to their acts all those other powers that are in some way rational, and therefore, if man do well actually, this is because he has a good will. Therefore, the virtue that makes a man to do well actually, and not merely to have aptness to do well, must be either in the will itself; or in some power as moved by the will.<sup>2</sup>

Thomas is explaining the relationship that co-exist between the virtues and the intellect and how they work together in order for man to be a unity. He is trying to penetrate the mystery of human behaviour. Why human acts are bad and some are good and yet having been performed by the same person. Does the will command the intellect to perform certain acts? And if so why this disparity that some acts are good and others bad? This shows that there must be a force that moves the intellect and at the same time the intellect is free to choose that good which the will direct it to. In expounding this point, Thomas says that:

Now it happens that the intellect is moved by the will, just as are the other powers: for a man considers something actually, because he wills to do so. And therefore the intellect, in so far as it is subordinate to the will, can be the subject of virtue absolutely so called. And in this way the speculative intellect, or the reason, is the subject of Faith: for the intellect is moved by the command of the will to assent to what is of faith: *for no man believeth, unless he will*. But the practical intellect is the subject of prudence. For since prudence is the right reason of things to be done, it is a condition therefore that man be rightly disposed in regard to the principles of this reason of things to be done, that is in regard to their ends, to which man is rightly disposed by the rectitude of the will, just as to principles of speculative truth he is rightly disposed by the natural right of the active intellect. And therefore as the subject of science, which is the right reason of the speculative truths, is the speculative intellect in its relation to the active intellect, so the subject of prudence is the practical intellect in its relation to the right will.<sup>3</sup>

Thomas is teaching that the will always leads or moves the intellect to where the good is. In the whole process, the intellect does not just know the good but even the truth which is synonymous to the good. He concludes by teaching that; "the good of each thing is its end: and therefore, as truth is the end of the intellect, so to know truth is the good act of the intellect. Whence the habit, which perfects the intellect in regard to knowledge of truth, whether speculative or practical, is a virtue."

The shows clearly beyond doubt that virtues are the foundation of morality because they are a power in the human soul. As such they guide man to make his choices in live, henceforth assisting man to grow towards his destiny. This means that man attains his maturity by living a virtuous life. Therefore, man in the society becomes a moral agent who by his live or actions demonstrates that his destiny is above this physical and changing world. Man having been the moral agent, the realization of the common good becomes an attainable undertaking.

## **II. MAN IS THE MORAL AGENT IN THE SOCIETY**

Man as a moral agent is a being that is endowed with the intellect which deliberates on actions as well as the free-will which consents to or chooses the actions without the constraint of necessity or fate, hence attracting a sense of moral culpability after the execution of the desired act. Man is not just like any other animal, but a free moral agent.<sup>4</sup> As an agent, he is an actor, one who is capable of acting or performing; a free agent is one who can act as he pleases without any restraint of any kind placed upon him; and a free moral agent is one who is free to act as he pleases and without any restraint on all moral issues, that is, questions involving the qualities of

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<sup>2</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*.

<sup>3</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*.

<sup>4</sup>Judith A. Boss, *Analyzing Moral Issues* (London: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1999), 45-47, 58, 76-79.

right and wrong.<sup>5</sup> Thomas asserts that in order for man to make this decision, there is the law that guides him. He teaches that:

Law is a rule and measure of acts, whereby man is induced to act or is restrained from acting: for *Lex* (law) is derived from *ligare* (to bind), because it binds one to act. Now the rule and measure of human acts is the reason, which is the first principle of human acts, as is evident, since it belongs to the reason to direct to the end, which is the first principle in all matters of actions, according to the Philosopher. Now that which is the principle in any genus, is the rule and measure of that genus: for instance, unity in the genus of numbers, and the first movement in the genus of movements. Consequently, it follows that law is something pertaining to reason.<sup>6</sup>

Man as a rational being then, becomes the sole moral agent of the society whereby every action is directed toward the common good of the society because law is something that is ordained toward the common good. This common good has a relationship to the destiny of man which is happiness. Therefore, the law does not enslave rather it creates that atmosphere for man to accomplish the desired destiny.

Consistently with the conditions perennially stated, moral agency admits of a wide variety of constitutional laws and circumstances in those who are capable of it. They may be unembodied spirits, or invested with various orders of corporeity. They may differ vastly in the strength and range of their intellectual and active powers. They may be instigated by affectations and emotions, greatly varying both in nature and character.<sup>7</sup>

Each individual may owe his existence to a distinct act of creation, as is the case with those beings revealed to us in scripture under the name of angels: or a whole race may derive it, through the medium of predecessors, from an original stock, as is the case with man, that is, Adam and Eve. They may be created with the powers necessary to moral agency in a state fit for immediate exercise,<sup>8</sup> as was the case with the first human pair; or these may be progressively developed from a mere origin, manifesting scarcely anything more than the characteristics of animal existence, as in all the other members of the human family. Human nature may be conceived of subsisting in three moral states.

### III. MORAL STATES

Firstly, in a state of trial, the heart drawn by outward and emotive provocations towards evil, but with the moral sense so swift and keen as to supply sufficient motive to resist and repel them. Inappropriateness towards the objects of moral conduct is not necessary to moral agency; for that could not exist but in a mental habitude entirely devoid of emotion.<sup>9</sup> Pleasure or gratification of whatever kind necessarily involves self-satisfaction towards the object producing it, and pain displacency; and there are no emotions or affectations which do not involve one or other of these, a mind indifferent to the objects of moral action, must be an emotionless mind, and such a mind could be proved to be incapable of moral agency.

Secondly, human nature may subsist in a situation in which the heart being inclined towards evil, evil is frequently chosen and pursued, yet with the power of choosing and pursuing good, demonstrated by the feeling of regret, which can only be experienced when we are conscious of doing wrong when we might have avoided it, by mutual blame, and by evils indulged in at one time, being refrained from at another.<sup>10</sup>

Thirdly, by long fidelity and the practice of virtue under trial, we can conceive of a habitude of mind being acquired, in which good will be chosen and pursued with something like the ease and certitude of instinct. In which of these states human nature at present subsists, it is not difficult to determine; the most tangible and miserable facts show its moral disorder. Men feel regret for many things which they do, which shows that they are conscious of doing wrong individually. Men blame one another, which shows either that they do wrong or judge wrong: either that moral law is violated, or the moral sense depraved; either of which is unsuited with an underage state of moral being.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Austin Fagothey, *Right and Reason: Ethics in Theory and Practice*, Fourth Edition (California: The C. V. Mosby Company, 1967), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*.

<sup>7</sup> William M'Combie, *Moral Agency* (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1842), 92.

<sup>8</sup> Boss, *Analyzing Moral Issues*, 45-47.

<sup>9</sup> Boss, *Analyzing Moral Issues*, 37-38, 45, 153.

<sup>10</sup> Boss, *Analyzing Moral Issues*.

<sup>11</sup> Boss, *Analyzing Moral Issues*.

Let us only be aware that men quarrel with each other, and this single fact alone is sufficient to prove that human nature is in a state of moral disorder; for if men were in a right moral state of affairs, men would form the same judgments and pursue the same conduct in regard to all the great points of moral law; and if in regard to any minor and obscurer matters they might ever differ in opinion, humility, sincerity, and love would prevent them from quarrelling. The question now arises, how is it that human nature is in such a situation? Was such its original condition, or has it suffered any irrationality? Many things forbid our concluding that human nature is now in its original condition.

It is not consonant to our notions of the moral character of God to think that man is morally in the state to which he was assigned, and for which his powers were adapted by his maker. Then the state of anarchy in which the recognized powers of the same moral being subsist, equally forbid such a conclusion. It is the dictate of universalization, that all the powers and propension of our nature, should be regulated by that sense of right and wrong with which God has endowed us, in every case in which a right and wrong are cognizable by this sense; but how far this is from being the case, the diversity which subsists between the moral conduct of any community, and the moral judgements of its more thoughtful and virtuous members, sufficiently manifests; and not less the disparity between the dictates of that sense even in die minds of the vicious, in moments of reflection, and the gross excesses in which they indulge.

If then we may not conclude that man's moral being came at first in this state from the hands of his maker, various deeply interesting questions arise in our minds when, and how did irrationality take place? How come it prevails universally? Man being a creature under a generative constitution, is this irrationality in any respect a transmitted thing? and if it is, in what respect, and to what extent? If this irrationality is original or constitutional, is it under the power of personal agency so as that it can thereby be either increased, or diminished and repaired? These are questions, some solution of which is indispensable to any distinct conceptions of the moral constitution and moral state of man.

St. Thomas Aquinas', asserts that:

The object of hope is a future good difficult but possible to obtain, so the object of fear is a future evil, arduous and not to be easily avoided. From this we may gather whatever is entirely subject to our power and will, is not an object of fear; and that nothing gives rise to fear save what is due to external cause. Now human will is the proper cause of the evil of sin: and consequently evil of sin, properly speaking, is not an object of fear. Nevertheless, since human will may be inclined to sin by an extrinsic cause; if this cause has a strong power of inclination, in that respect a man may fear the evil of sin, in so far as it arises from extrinsic cause: as when he fears to dwell in the company of the wicked men and women, lest he be led by them to sin. However, properly speaking, a man, thus, disposed, doubts the being led astray rather than the sin considered in its proper nature, that is, as involuntary act; for considered in this light it is not an object of fear to him.<sup>12</sup>

He teaches that it is the free choice of man to commit a sin, though fear is there, because sin separates man from God and as a result he does not enjoy that happiness which is designated by his creator. This creates fear in the life of man because he is not sure of his destiny.

Man, as distinguished from other beings, each of which owes his existence to a distinct independent act of creation, has a generative constitution, a constitution by which each individual subsequent to those of the original creation, takes its origin from parents, an origin wholly basic, and under which each order, and within each order every species is limited and defined by characteristics which permanently distinguish it from every other. This appears to be the order of all propagated organic being, be it vegetable, animal, or rational.<sup>13</sup> Respecting the substance of mind, we are entirely ignorant; but in human nature we have strong grounds for thinking that mind has a basic origin, analogous to that of body; for be that substance what it may, we are certain that greatness or high development of mind, consists in reach of knowledge, power of action and endurance, and self-control; none of which can be acquired without long and strenuous exercise and effort. Whatever be their substratum, intellectual and moral being in man present themselves to our view in a mere origin at first.

Viewing then this being in its origin, or as soon as it is capable of moral action, gives it indication of any tendency towards good or towards evil? Does it manifest what we may call a taste for moral law, and a spirit of inquiry respecting it, with an irreverent will to act in conformity to it; or is it characterized by a tendency to act

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<sup>12</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*.

<sup>13</sup> Fagothey, *Right and Reason*, 4, 7, 82 and 86.

on impulse and propension regardless of such law? Or, if indifferent to it, previously to its being brought before it, does it when such is the case, show a promptitude in acting agreeably to its dictates? Does it show a regard for the author of its being by inquiry respecting his character, with a readiness to entertain high notions respecting him, and desire and effort to act agreeably to his will, so far as it is or can be known; or does it manifest unconcern respecting him, conjoined with a tendency to entertain inadequate and debasing notions of his nature and character, and to yield to other beings the homage and obedience due to him alone?

Impartial observation and general history bring out an answer to these inquiries in agreement with the declaration of an ancient and revered book; that men do "not like to retain God in their knowledge," and even according to what knowledge they may have of him, are not careful to "glorify him as God." However, man is an imitative being, especially when young; and much of the evil tendency appearing in the early stage of his life, may be accounted for from the evil example, and defective or erroneous training of his guardians and seniors. Doubtless, this is true; but will this alone account for the tendency in question? There is a ready test for any such theory.

Where children are partly under good and partly under evil influences, which are they most apt in general to yield to? It is possible enough to adopt a standard of moral action so low, as will greatly abate our estimate of the aberration of human feeling and conduct from the rule of right. Nonetheless, on the principle surely a just one of supreme regard being had to him who is supreme to him who is the author of our being, and the benefactor from whose hand we receive all that we enjoy, this estimate cannot be other than appalling.

Such a principle recognized will not permit us to hesitate about the right answer to the question, whether there is a greater aptitude in the young to yield to good influences or to evil. We mean not by any means that there is in all men a proneness to commit every form of sin, so soon as occasion and opportunity present themselves; such a view of the moral state of human nature would be utterly inconsistent with obvious fact. Nevertheless, that there is a permanent derangement in human nature, which, if we rightly apprehend it, is this, a predominance of the sensual over the spiritual; the latter, in constant risk of being smothered as it were by the former, an evil, the primary and melancholiest manifestation of which is neglect and forgetfulness of God, with the concomitant tendency to act on motives of sense and immediate circumstances, instead of on those of a remote and superior sensual kind. This much obviously is predicable of man universally.<sup>14</sup> Tendencies to particular sins, whether personal or against society, may arise from special influences, or be derived from immediate progenitors, but this unquestionably pervades the whole race.

This specific derangement of our nature has manifested itself strikingly and most mournfully, in the perpetual proneness of mankind to sensualize the objects of moral and spiritual regard. Thus, we find that the adoration of sensible objects soon became so universal that some people could scarcely be preserved from it by special divine provisions; and we may perceive in the image-worship of the Romish Church, and in the character of the Mohammedan Paradise, striking illustrations of the same universal tendency.<sup>15</sup>

Then again, what is the amount or force of this tendency? It cannot be such as to necessitate sin, for sin necessitated would cease to be sin; no being could be charged with guilt in doing what he could not of necessity but do. The tendency, inasmuch as it inheres in our nature, is physical, as contradistinguished from moral, strictly so called; yet it is controllable by the will, stimulated by moral motives, for were it not so, it would not be only a tendency, it would be a law; and so far as it is thus controllable, and so soon as it becomes so, it comes to be of a moral nature. The range of moral law is no wider than the possession of a self-regulating or self-controlling power: nothing is morally good but what results from the exercise of this power; nothing immoral or evil but what results from its abuse or neglect; consequently, not only are beings who want this power incapable of guilt, but also in beings who are capable of it, guilt is not predicable of any state of feeling which may subsist, or of any action that may be performed, previously to its development, or during seasons when it may be suspended.

No one regards insane persons as responsible; nor can the somnambulist be called to account for his actions, nor he who talks in his sleep, for his words, or the thoughts and feelings they express. As little, we conceive, can infants be charged with sin for any dispositions or feelings they may have, which maybe conceived at variance with moral law, so long as they are incapable of knowing it, and are without the power of self-control, which is a *sine qua non* in all who are the subjects of it.<sup>16</sup> However, while the tendency we are speaking of, cannot be charged as guilt in the unconscious stages and states of our being, it is involved in the principles just stated, that

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<sup>14</sup>Fagothey, *Right and Reason*.

<sup>15</sup>M'Combie, *Moral Agency*, 101.

<sup>16</sup>M'Combie, *Moral Agency*.

it immediately becomes so, when allowed to prevail, after we become possessed of the knowledge of the law to which it is inimical, and acquire the power of self-control by which it is to be regulated. Of the substance, or substantial essence, of mind we know nothing at all, but from the very nature of moral agency we can clearly perceive that it cannot have any inherent moral impurity independent of, and apart from, thought, feeling, and volition; for there are no other conceivable modes of mental action.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, if not mental action only, but conscious voluntary action, is involved in the very idea of moral agency, whatever belongs to the mind anterior to, or independent of, thought, feeling, and volition is as clearly physical as the bones and sinews of our bodily frame; and for any such state of mind, if there were any such that might be so named, we should be as little accountable as for the length of our limbs or the complexion of our skin. In the present state of human nature, the mind can act only in and by the body which it animates; and being so embodied and limited, is from the very dawning of its faculties in a state of constant contact and converse with the material world, and being furnished with all the susceptibilities requisite for, and proper to, an intimate connection with, dependence on, and control over, the objects around it, it must ever be open to direct impressions from these.

The world of sense is, thus, that which first presents itself to man, and with which he is first capable of being acquainted; and were he always incapable of knowing anything else, or were his situation such as to shut him up to impressions of sense, and the thoughts which they occasion, he certainly could not be blamed for not thinking of anything besides, or for not acting on other motives, when placed in a condition in which none other could operate.<sup>18</sup> Nor could he in such a case contract any moral stain by invariably acting according to such impressions and stimulants, for he would only be acting in a manner compatible with his capabilities and condition, seeing he had no scope for choosing, whether he would yield to these, or act on motives of a higher order.<sup>19</sup>

The essence of a state of moral pollution is a disposition to choose, and an indulging with delight in, what is known to be wrong; but it could not be moral pollution unless these indulgences or pleasures were within the range of choice, and perceived to be under the regulation of moral law; for the mind and conscience cannot be defiled but by indulging in, or choosing, what is believed or known to be wrong. However, this incapacity of moral perception and choice is characteristic only of the first stage of our being, to which alone, consequently, these remarks are applicable: man, as soon as the powers of rational and voluntary action are developed, is, furnished with the means of acquiring spiritual knowledge, and subsists under an economy teeming with events which strongly prompt to moral reflection and action; and he is guilty because he prefers yielding to the appetites and the impressions of sense,<sup>20</sup> to attending to, and acting on, moral and spiritual monitions and the irrationality of his name is manifested in this, that while he is facile in yielding to external impressions and the cravings of appetite, he shows an inaptness and aversion to admit and retain spiritual impressions, and withstands the influence of motives drawn from super-sensual and eternal verities.<sup>21</sup>

Even so, this propension of which we are speaking can have no practical operation, or can induce no action of a moral nature previous to a knowledge of right, or the distinction between right and wrong. There can be nothing moral or immoral where there is no power of choice, and in order to the power of choice there must be the perception of distinction, and in order to the power of moral choice the perception of moral distinctions of the distinction between right and wrong. Nevertheless, the knowledge that a thing is right, obligatory, or such as we ought to do, involves in it a sense of power, or the perception that it is something that we can do. The sense of obligation and the perception of impossibility are intuitively contradictory; it is impossible they can subsist together.

Nonetheless, not only is there always a general sense of right and wrong developed previous to the guilty operativeness of any propension to evil; in every individual case there must be the power of knowing the law which restrains and regulates any propension, before there can be guilt in not restraining or regulating it; for a law utterly hid and unknowable is for all practical purposes and the only purpose of moral law is practical; the same as none and where there is no conscious violation of law, and where ignorance is owing to the voluntary neglect of no duty, there can be no guilt. So clear is it then that man has power to regulate and restrain the tendency or propension which is in his nature to evil, that without this power any tendency in his nature could

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<sup>17</sup> M'Combie, *Moral Agency*.

<sup>18</sup> See Batista Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology* (Rome: Urbaniana Press, 1985).

<sup>19</sup> Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology*.

<sup>20</sup> Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology*.

<sup>21</sup> Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology*.

not be a tendency to moral evil, and never could induce that, perceiving voluntary power is involved in the very idea of anything being moral.

In addition to the evils of constitutional propension, the mode and the relative position in which man's rational and moral powers are developed, involve in the present state of human nature peculiar disadvantages and difficulties. Human beings apart from the propensions they may derive from, or through, their parents, depend so much on them in early life for their notions of right and wrong, for the depth of their impressions regarding moral evil, for the habits they form, and as to whether the power of self-government be cultivated, or appetite and passion allowed to obtain sway, each individual and each generation is connected so with that which preceded it, influenced in its character so much, not only by derived tendency, but by instance and direct moulding influence, that when once human nature is radically deranged, difficulties almost insurmountable present themselves in the way of its restoration.

However, when or how did the moral disposition of man suffers this derangement? Here, history generally utterly fails us, and we anxiously ask, is there any document existing which can throw light on questions so important; or have any traditions reached us of a happier constitution and condition having ever been enjoyed? From whatever source derived, traditions have been current among all nations of a 'golden age' of innocence and felicity, as the pristine condition of man. Nevertheless, we have yet a surer guide, in a book which is proved beyond reasonable doubt, to be not only authentic, but divine; we have the account of the origin of the human race, of the state in which man was created, of the moral trial to which he was subjected, of how he transgressed the law under which he was placed, and that the result was that melancholy condition of human nature which we have been contemplating.

#### **IV. MORALITY AS THE FOUNDATION OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN THE SOCIETY**

Morality seeks to create a better understanding of sound conventional practices in the public, private and non-profit sectors, highlighting these areas and the issues are, presenting work and practices that have been executed in the past, and exploring the implications that sound ethical principles have as a foundation for good governance for public servants, non-profit organization employees and even private employees. For the reason that governance is a term that spreads across all fields, several applications of sound ethical practices ought to be critically interpreted for the sake of the well-being of humanity.

##### **4.1 Why Governance**

The public image of any organization should accurately reflect its culture. It follows, then, that good governance should be in the bloodstream of the organization as this will be reflected in the culture. To carry the analogy further, in the same way that healthy blood and bones are reflected in the naturally healthy look of a person, so an organization whose internal functions are healthy will naturally look so from an external perspective. In considering the three sectors: public, private, and non-profit, there are commonalities such as ethical considerations, alignment of goals and objectives which when arrived at, lead to the creation of a suitable stakeholder decision-making model, and most importantly, instituting reporting systems structured to provide transparency and accountability.<sup>22</sup>

Good governance is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and follows the rule of law. Good governance is responsive to the present and future needs of the organization, exercises prudence in policy-setting and decision-making, and that the best interests of all stakeholders are taken into account.<sup>23</sup>

Accountability in the most rudimentary term refers to the financial accountability of an organization or government, ensuring effective, transparent, and publicly accountable system of managing the public funds, while carrying out the duties and responsibilities, as well as having auditing systems which meet both local as well as international standards and are open to public scrutiny.

The rule of law element ensures that a fair, predictable and stable legal framework be established and applied so that businesses, governments, and individuals will be able to access economic opportunities and act on them without fear of arbitrary interference.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Ogechukwu Marlyn Agim, "Instituting Sound Ethical Practices as a Foundation for Good Governance," *The Siegel Institute Journal of Applied Ethics*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2018):1-26(8).

<sup>23</sup> Agim, "Instituting Sound Ethical Practices as a Foundation for Good Governance," 9.

<sup>24</sup> Agim, "Instituting Sound Ethical Practices as a Foundation for Good Governance," 10.

Participation is an essential element in securing commitment and support for projects and enhancing the quality of their implementation, through granting civil society and communities the opportunity to participate during the formulation of development strategies and gives directly impacted communities and groups the opportunity to participate in the design and implementation of social programs and projects.

Transparency refers to the disposition an organization or government has towards being honest and open concerning its economic and overall decision-making processes, as well as the availability of information and clarification of rules and regulations.<sup>25</sup>

Good governance, although defined differently in cultural, social, and religious contexts, should incorporate the abovementioned parameters, because this sets the tone for the establishment of sound policies and ideas which could be implemented in ways that are accountable, effective, and efficient. The foregoing is necessary especially for the public and non-profit sectors.

#### **4.2 Relevance of Good Governance**

Good governance is understood as a combination of the responsibilities shared by the leadership of any public or private institution and organization to ensure it is effectively run, as well as how the leadership is supported in the establishment and implementation of policies and regulations. Good governance brings many benefits such as keeping the organization true to its identity, vision and values, motivating staff, volunteers, and members by showing exemplary leadership qualities, contributing to the impact of the work that has been undertaken by the organization, reassuring stakeholders about the way the organization is being run, maintaining and restoring wider public confidence in voluntary and community organizations and the private sector. Investing time and effort to strengthen the governance of our organizations is something which should take a high priority.<sup>26</sup>

Good governance practices encompass the important role of leadership in ensuring that sound governance policies are instilled throughout the organization and puts responsibility on all public servants to apply governance practices and procedures in their day-to-day work. Good governance comprises both performance which is how an agency uses governance arrangements to contribute to its overall performance and the delivery of goods, services or programs, and conformance how an agency uses governance arrangements to ensure it meets the requirements of the law, regulations, published standards and community expectations of probity, accountability and openness. This means that, on a daily basis, governance is typically about the way public servants make decisions and implement policies.<sup>27</sup>

According to the United Kingdom Report: "Good Governance: A Code for the Voluntary and Community Sector" developed in 2005, an effective board will provide good governance and leadership by understanding their role, ensuring delivery of organizational purpose, being effective as individuals and a team, exercising control, behaving with integrity, and being open and accountable.<sup>28</sup> These codes are general in nature, and can be applied in organizations, regardless of the culture and country. Only the practice and procedures will vary, depending on the type and size of the organization. Underlying each principle is the additional principle of equality ensuring equality, diversity and equality of treatment for all members of the community.<sup>29</sup>

The focus on ethics in governance usually concentrates on ethical structure as a mechanism to improve governance. For a framework of moral values and ethical principles to have a significant and sustainable impact on the professional conduct of public servants an "ethics infrastructure" is required. The basic components of this infrastructure are: a framework of moral values and ethical principles; a code of conduct; established administrative procedures; mechanisms for whistle-blowing; ombudsman services; and management, coordination and evaluation of an ethical infrastructure.

Some of these components on the list are based on the values approach and the rest are based on the disciplinary approach. To be effective in addressing the problem of corruption which assumes varied forms, an ethical

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<sup>25</sup>International Fund for Agricultural Development (1999).

<sup>26</sup>B. Lipson, "Effective Governance: A Guide for Small and Diaspora NGOs," *Report in Peer Learning Programme for Common Ground Initiative* (2010). <http://www.intrac.org/data/files/resources/730/Governance-A-PLP-Toolkit-INTRAC.pdf> (Accessed on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019).

<sup>27</sup>L. Briggs, *Building Better Governance* (2007). <http://www.apsc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf/0010/7597/bettergovernance.pdf> (Accessed on 2nd May 2019).

<sup>28</sup>Lipson, "Effective Governance: A Guide for Small and Diaspora NGOs."

<sup>29</sup>Lipson, "Effective Governance: A Guide for Small and Diaspora NGOs."

infrastructure must integrate both approaches in a coherent and balanced system.<sup>30</sup> The components of a framework of moral values and ethical principles is dependent on the individual and the level of development of his moral values, approach to ethical issues, as well as the adaptation of those ethical principles to the challenges found within the organization at any given point in time.

#### **4.3 Features that Derail Good Governance**

To be able to understand why the principles of good governance are not being respected or reflected in the public sector today, it is useful to look into the factors that facilitate such regression. Corruption, as defined by Transparency International, is “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.”<sup>31</sup> Conflicts of interest are often the motivating force generating unethical behaviour. Three types are frequently encountered in public institutions that tolerate corrupt behaviour, for example, when a public servant has vested personal interests in contracting a particular company, practices nepotism or favouritism when hiring personnel, and/or receives post-employment benefits from a contracted company.<sup>32</sup> Other acts range from an act of bribing someone to skipping a queue or bribing a traffic officer to avoid a speed fine to serious conduct as the irregular award of tenders or even buying political patronage.<sup>33</sup>

Public institutions often limit their concern about unethical practices to these three forms of corrupt behaviour, by establishing policies and procedures that attempt to prevent these types of conflicts of interest. Unfortunately, other forms of corrupt practices exist that are sometimes ignored by public institutions, and become part of the unofficial institutional culture. Not only is this critical to the effectiveness of resource use and the reduction of corruption and waste, but it also goes a long way in ensuring public trust in the policies and decisions made on a daily basis.

#### **4.4 Unethical Practices on Good Governance**

According to Anello, unethical practices lead to negative consequences such as the wastage of public funds, which reduces the government's ability to provide good quality essential services, hence depriving the citizens of their basic human needs and rights.<sup>34</sup> There is also an economic impact when large amounts of public funds are wasted. When the focus is taken off obeying the call to serve the people in political office, toward other ventures that profit only one individual, it leads to a negative impact on the image and trust of the organization, as inefficiency and lack of transparency reduce public institutions' credibility, erodes the trust of members of the public and donors, and lower investments in countries.

In a specific illustration, picture an organization where unethical practices are consistently carried out, where there is no attempt made in ensuring transparency or public participation in the formulation and implementation of policies that will affect members of the public, and where corruption is the order of the day. Firstly, among the employees in the organization there will be a dwindling respect for law and order, and then there will be acts of impunity, because of the belief that there is no punishment for wrongdoers. Among management, there will be a growing sense of loss of control not only of the employees, but of the organization as a whole, because corruption and vices which work against good governance have no loyalty to any one party or faction. It is clear to see that unethical practices benefit no one in the long run.

#### **4.5 Restoring Sound Ethical Practices**

The question of rapport between morality/ethics and good governance is a fundamental one that must be asked: What will it take to end anti-ethical practices such as corruption and to ensure good governance? One of the arguably most important factors in the fight against corruption and reinstating good governance is the human element. In other words, we need to address human values and behaviour to bring about a lasting change in the institutional frameworks of several countries and nations aiming to address and conquer the challenges of good governance. Needless to say, having transparent governance and administration systems in place are also important elements.

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<sup>30</sup>E. Anello, *Ethical Infrastructure for Good Governance in the Public Pharmaceutical Sector*, Working Draft for Field Testing and Revision for the World Health Organization (2006).

<sup>31</sup>Transparency International (2010).

<sup>32</sup>Anello, *Ethical Infrastructure for Good Governance in the Public Pharmaceutical Sector*.

<sup>33</sup>T. Mandonsela, *Corruption and Governance Challenges: The South Africa Experience*, Speech Presented at the National Conference on Corruption and Governance Challenges in Nigeria (2010). [http://www.pprotect.org/media\\_gallery/2010/PP%20Speech%20Nigeria%20Corruption%20and%20Governance%20Challenges%20final.pdf](http://www.pprotect.org/media_gallery/2010/PP%20Speech%20Nigeria%20Corruption%20and%20Governance%20Challenges%20final.pdf) (Accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019).

<sup>34</sup>Anello, *Ethical Infrastructure for Good Governance in the Public Pharmaceutical Sector*.

A huge part of the human element that is critical for promoting good governance involves the values of the community within which we seek to fight corruption. According to Mandonsela, there are three dimensions to the human element.<sup>35</sup> These are the values of each individual, community values, and political will at all levels of leadership. It is particularly important that the community's understanding of corruption and consensus on what is inappropriate is in sync with those that are formally charged with combating corruption, here speaking of anti-corruption agencies and ethical watchdog organizations.

The corruption tolerance levels of the community can also be a force for or against corruption. In order to raise awareness of the community in regards to debilitating effects of unethical practices, education is required. The community education and awareness will provide a fertile ground for the practice of meritocracy, which is a sound ethical principle of governance involving the appointment of government officials on the basis of merit and ability. This is the exact opposite of vices such as nepotism or favouritism. Other efforts so far to address the issue of the deviation from sound ethical practices in governance, in glaring cases such as corruption and improper conduct in execution of duties in the public sector have focused on the application of two basic strategies, one being a legislative reform approach, which establishes laws against corruption with appropriate punitive consequences for violations.

The approach is often referred to as the "discipline approach", which attempts to deter corrupt practices through the fear of punishment. The second strategy, often termed the "values approach", attempts to increase institutional integrity by promoting moral values and ethical principles as a way of motivating public servants to behave ethically. Experience with these two strategies has shown that neither is sufficient if used alone and coordinated use of both is required to have a significant impact on establishing ethical practices within an institution.<sup>36</sup>

By and large, good governance is an ideal which is difficult to achieve in its totality. It typically involves well-intentioned people who bring their ideas, experiences, preferences, and other human strengths as well as shortcomings to the policy-making table. Good governance can only be achieved through an on-going discourse that attempts to capture all of the considerations involved in assuring that stakeholder interests are addressed and reflected in policy initiatives.<sup>37</sup>

## **V. HOW GOOD GOVERNANCE FACILITATES "COMMON GOOD" REALIZATION**

The intricate relationship between good governance and common good is evident in the utilitarian ideals underlying both concepts. Governance could be bad or good. It is bad if it is not people centered, if it negates development and promotes ineptitude and inefficiency. It is good if it promotes good life and ensures economic and social development, among other human spheres, that is, by being holistic in both nature and scope. To describe governance as good or bad according to Ogundiya, requires the understanding of the essence of the State which is not only embedded in the constitution but exist to promote common good.<sup>38</sup> The implication of this is clearly explained by Eboh this way; "The common good stands in opposition to the good of rulers or of a ruling group. It implies that every individual, no matter how high or low has a duty to share in promoting the welfare of the community as well as a right to benefit from that welfare."<sup>39</sup>

Common implies that the "good" is all inclusive. In essence, the common good cannot exclude or exempt any section of the population. If any section of the population is in fact excluded from participating in the life of the community, even at a minimal level, then that is a contradiction to the concept of the common good.<sup>40</sup> The above explanations capture the view of Ogundiya in his analysis of good governance as he maintains that governance is good provided it is able to achieve the desired end of the state defined in terms of justice, equity, protection of life and property, enhanced participation, preservation of the rule of law and improved living standard of the population.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Mandonsela, *Corruption and Governance Challenges: The South Africa Experience*.

<sup>36</sup> Anello, *Ethical Infrastructure for Good Governance in the Public Pharmaceutical Sector*.

<sup>37</sup> Governance Pro, *Creating a Culture of Board Excellence: Eight Elements of Good Governance* (2010). <http://www.governancepro.com/news/> (Accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2019).

<sup>38</sup> I. Ogundiya, "Democracy and Good Governance: Nigeria's Dilemma," *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations*, Vol. 4, No. 6 (2010):201-208(206).

<sup>39</sup> P. M. Eboh, "Philosophy, Women and Responsible Leadership in Africa," in J. O. Oguejiofor, ed. *Philosophy, Democracy and Responsible Governance in Africa* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 33.

<sup>40</sup> Eboh, "Philosophy, Women and Responsible Leadership in Africa."

<sup>41</sup> Ogundiya, "Democracy and Good Governance: Nigeria's Dilemma."

Similarly, many African visions define good governance as a means of accountability in all its ramifications. It also means the rule of law and an unfettered judiciary; that is freedom of expression and choice in political association. Good governance means transparency, equity and honesty in public office. From all these assertions, it can be inferred that good governance, as a concept, is applicable to all sections of society such as the government, legislature, judiciary, media, private sector, corporate sector, trade unions and non-government organizations (NGOs).

The implication is that it is only when all these and other various sections of society conduct their affairs in a socially responsible manner that the objective of achieving larger good of the largest number of people in society can be achieved. Remarkably, it is only when we appraise the manner in which the affairs of a country are run that we can discern which government is good or bad or which has been a success or failure. Failure of governance implies that those in political control have not properly managed the economy and other social institutions.

According to World Bank, bad governance has many features, among which are: failure to make a clear separation between what is public and what is private, hence a tendency to divert public resources for private gain; failure to establish a predictable framework for law and government behaviour in a manner that is conducive to development, or arbitrariness in the application of rules and laws; excessive rules, regulations, licensing requirements, which impede the functioning of markets and encourage rent seeking; priorities that are inconsistent with development, thus, resulting in a misallocation of resources and excessively narrow base for, or non-transparencies, decision-making.<sup>42</sup>

However, looking at the rate of unemployment, diversion of resources by public officials, escalating rate of corruption, tribal cum ethnic clashes, abuse of office by public officials, looting of public finances, kidnapping, increased rate of cybercrimes and other types of crimes there is every reason to believe that Good Governance is still a mirage as far as many polities are concerned. Leke expressed similar views as he emphasizes that, the problem of numerous countries development is both a symptom and consequence of the absence of Good Governance.<sup>43</sup> Since Good Governance implies the exercise of power in a responsible and responsive manner that will ensure greater good.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The paper has analyzed the subject matter of virtues as the bases for sound governance as a gateway to the realization of common good. Virtues have been conventionally understood as the positive character traits which could be learnt by the involvement in repetition. For the preceding comprehension, human beings have the potentiality of acquiring virtues which generally perfect their being. Virtues are inculcated through proper disposition as acts, habit and then character. Since human beings are moral agents, they have the sense of right and wrong, good and bad, thus, the capacity to be judged from a moral or ethical perspective. Morality is an aspect of the *We* and not the *I*, hence, it can only meaningfully subsist within the confines of the society. The argument of this paper is that, through virtues, as the foundation of morality, the society could be virtuous too as the individuals institute the society, hence, a direct proportionality type of relationship exists between the *I* and *We*.

Furthermore, virtues could be argued to be the bedrock of good governance which ultimately facilitates the realization of the common good. Minus the positive character traits, the society is at the confusion of how to ever achieve the common good. It is greatly through the acquisition of the common good the society could assert itself to have lived out the positive character traits. Additionally, the argument at hand is that virtues are the solution to certain social ill(s) such as corruption which has continued to disadvantage many at the expense of the few who benefit themselves with the proceeds of the common good.

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<sup>42</sup>World Bank, *Sub-Saharan Africa, From Crises to Sustainable Growth: A Long Term Perspective Study* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2011).

<sup>43</sup>O. Leke, *Democracy and Good Governance in Nigeria's Fourth Republic* (2010) (Accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2019).

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