

ABUI ABRAHAM ABUI

THE VICES AGAINST THE VIRTUE OF TEMPERANCE  
AMONG THE ATYAP CULTURAL HERITAGE OF AFRICA:  
A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

INTRODUCTION

When Socrates, an Athenian moral philosopher, cautioned “man know thyself”, the immediate content intended was the art of self-mastery but this was neither obvious to the hearer nor could any random combination of the words “man-know”, “know-thyself”, “man-thyself” have given away its moral import. In fact, what any cursory look at this aphorism presents us is the epistemological rather than the moral questions, viz: human knowledge in general, epistemology of man, or self-consciousness. Little wonder, in *Theaetetus*, what we find is a discourse on self-perception. It is in this light that John Locke considers this aphorism as a call to the awareness of the existence of facts. Following this path of misconceptions, Descartes would rather pursue the search for a way out of all the uncertainties, confusion and doubtful experiences. In contrast to a misconceived epistemological reading of “man know thyself”, what is primarily intended was a morally significant self-mastery, hence a copious acquisition of moral virtues so as to be a master of one’s nature rather than a servant to one’s human nature.

For Socrates, human nature is to be the servant to man, and whatsoever man wills to accomplish, he could only do to the extent he is able to tame his nature accordingly. In other words, if the human being wills to be a real man

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in possession of the things common to man, then he shall be his own sovereign. When a man fails to grasp this authority over his nature, he sinks to the level of the lower animals, and whatsoever the real man bids him do, even as if it were of the lower animals, that much shall he do. If he says “go”. He goes. If he says “come,” he comes. By this command, he performs the functions of life even as by a similar command the mule, the horse, the cow perform the will of their masters.

#### WHAT ARE VIRTUES?

The place of virtues in moral development continues to be occupying a central position such that we not only find it in Western traditions of philosophy but also in the Eastern traditions as well. The place of virtues in moral development continues to be central such that even philosophers who are not virtues ethicists cannot talk about ethics without reference being made to it. This is because moral arguments revolve around virtues and vices. While virtues produce good moral actions, vices lead to immoral actions that are widely condemned. The question of why certain actions are judged to be bad while others good cannot take away the centrality of virtues in moral life. Virtues ethicists ground their philosophies on virtues thus human actions to them are directly linked to either virtues or vices.

A virtue is a trait or quality that is deemed to be morally good and thus is valued as a foundation of principle and good moral being. Virtue is that which is moral, ethical, and just.<sup>1</sup> It is the avoiding of vices of deficiency or excess, and adhering to the natural, civil, and divine law. Virtue may be defined as possessing and utilizing “good” traits in a balanced way with these traits sometimes being understood as the Christian virtue, or as Aquinas’, or as Aristotle’s, although they aren’t limited to any one interpretation.

To be sure, a ‘virtue’ is a trait or quality that is deemed to be morally good and thus is valued as a foundation of principle and good moral being.<sup>2</sup> Virtue is that which is moral, ethical, and just.<sup>3</sup> It is the avoiding of vices of defi-

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher PETERSON, *Character, Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (Washington, DC, New York: American Psychological Association & Oxford University Press, 2004), 36.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas J. DEN UYL, *The Virtue of Prudence*, Studies in Moral Philosophy, vol. 5 (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 76.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher PETERSON & Martin E.P. SELIGMAN, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 36–9.

ciency or excess, and adhering to the natural, civil, and divine law. Virtue may be defined as possessing and utilizing “good” traits in a balanced way with these traits sometimes being understood as the Christian virtue, or as Aquinas’, or as Aristotle’s<sup>4</sup>, although they aren’t limited to any one interpretation.<sup>5</sup>

John Bloom notes that for the Rationalist philosopher René Descartes, virtue consists in the correct reasoning that should guide our actions. Men should seek the sovereign good that Descartes, following Zeno, identifies with virtue, as this produces a solid blessedness or pleasure. For Epicurus the sovereign good was pleasure, and Descartes says that in fact this is not in contradiction with Zeno’s teaching, because virtue produces a spiritual pleasure, that is better than bodily pleasure. Regarding Aristotle’s opinion that happiness depends on the goods of fortune, Descartes does not deny that these goods contribute to happiness, but remarks that they are in great proportion outside one’s own control, whereas one’s mind is under one’s complete control.<sup>6</sup>

Immanuel Kant, in his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*<sup>7</sup>, expresses true virtue as different from what commonly is known about this moral trait. In this sense, the notions of morals and virtues are nearly synonyms. They are the sentiments and values behind our ethical actions and rule-sets (they are the principles behind our codes of conduct). We can understand these as human emotions, and treat them empirically, or we can understand them as something more. Either way they are moral properties that cause us to act ethically, they are not themselves ethics and actions. So to be clear, while concepts like Kantian ethics and Utilitarianism ethics relate to a moral theory of vices and virtues, those empirically and logically gleaned “ethical rule-sets” aren’t themselves a comment on vice and virtue directly. Rather, “ethics” is action based on the moral principles we call virtues (ethics are like rule-sets for avoiding vice and ensuring virtues; virtues and morals are the metaphysical concepts underneath the ethics).

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<sup>4</sup> Aristotle’s account of virtue is found in his work *Nicomachean Ethics* (N.E.), which he named in honor of his son Nicomachus. Aristotle himself summarizes his notion of moral virtue in this way: “Virtues are means between extremes; they are states of character; by their own nature they tend to the doing of acts by which they are produced; they are in our power and voluntary; they act as prescribed by right reason” (N.E. 3.5).

<sup>5</sup> Joseph P. THOMPSON, *The Definition of Virtues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 56.

<sup>6</sup> John J. BLOM, *Descartes. His Moral Philosophy and Psychology* (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 67

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Immanuel KANT, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, trans. John T. Goldthwait (California: University of California Press, 1960).

In Kant's view, to be goodhearted, benevolent and sympathetic is not regarded as true virtue. The only aspect that makes a human truly virtuous is to behave in accordance with moral principles. Kant presents an example for more clarification; suppose that you come across a needy person in the street; if your sympathy leads you to help that person, your response does not illustrate your virtue. In this example, since you do not afford helping all needy ones, you have behaved unjustly, and it is out of the domain of principles and true virtue. Kant applies the approach of four temperaments to distinguish truly virtuous people. According to Kant, among all people with diverse temperaments, a person with melancholy frame of mind is the most virtuous whose thoughts, words and deeds are one of principles.

On another note, we underscore that Friedrich Nietzsche's view of virtue is based on the idea of an order of rank among people. For Nietzsche, the virtues of the strong are seen as vices by the weak and slavish, thus Nietzsche's virtue ethics is based on his distinction between master morality and slave morality. Nietzsche promotes the virtues of those he calls "higher men", people like Goethe and Beethoven. The virtues he praises in them are their creative powers ("the men of great creativity") "the really great men according to my understanding". According to Nietzsche these higher types are solitary, pursue a "unifying project", revere themselves and are healthy and life-affirming.<sup>8</sup> Because mixing with the herd makes one base, the higher type "strives instinctively for a citadel and a secrecy where he is saved from the crowd, the many, the great majority..."<sup>9</sup> The 'Higher type' also "instinctively seeks heavy responsibilities" in the form of an "organizing idea" for their life, which drives them to artistic and creative work and gives them psychological health and strength. The fact that the higher types are "healthy" for Nietzsche does not refer to physical health as much as a psychological resilience and fortitude. Finally, a higher type affirms life because he is willing to accept the eternal return of his life and affirm this forever and unconditionally.

#### WHAT ARE THE CARDINAL VIRTUES?

It is arguably true that discussions of the virtues had become more formalized in the writings of Plato, who stressed four particular virtues: tem-

<sup>8</sup> Brian LEITER, "Nietzsche's Moral and Political Philosophy," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), (p. 45), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/nietzsche-moral-political/>.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

perance, courage, wisdom, and justice.<sup>10</sup> Later philosophers dubbed these the cardinal virtues, that is, main virtues, because of the central role they play in making us good people.<sup>11</sup> According to Plato, each of these four virtues performs a special task. The virtue of temperance enables you to control your basic desires and natural impulses towards food, lust, and any other pleasurable drive that you might have. Courage helps define the nobler and heroic parts of you personality. You do not want to thoughtlessly rush into danger when you try to save the day, or be arrogant in how you deal with people less courageous than you are. Wisdom gives the rational part of your personality the capacity to make subtle judgment calls regarding the right way to live. The world is a complex and often confusing place, and wisdom enables you to navigate through your various choices. Finally justice helps you integrate all three aspects of your personality, the desiring part, the noble part, the rational part so that each part performs exactly as it should in the right situation. For Plato, these four virtues are a package deal since they are so intertwined: if you have one you also have the others, and if you lack one you also lack the others.<sup>12</sup> Even today Plato's depiction of the four cardinal virtues is an inspiration for all who seek to better understand how virtuous character traits can morally transform their lives. But it is the virtue theory of his student Aristotle that most influenced philosophy.

Be that as it may, we should note that the term 'cardinal' comes from the Latin *cardo* (hinge). They are termed cardinal virtues because they are regarded as the basic virtues required for a virtuous life. They regulate man's moral activities. These principles derive initially from Plato in *Republic*. Cicero however, expanded on them, and Ambrose, Augustine of Hippo, and Thomas Aquinas adapted them while expanding on the theological virtues.

The four cardinal virtues appear as a group (sometimes included in larger lists) long before they were later given this title. Plato had identified the four cardinal virtues with the classes of the city described in *The Republic*, and with the faculties of man. TEMPERANCE<sup>13</sup> was common to all classes, but primarily associated with the producing classes, the farmers and craftsmen, and with the animal appetites, to whom no special virtue was assigned;

<sup>10</sup> David CARR, "The Cardinal Virtues and Plato's Moral Psychology", *The Philosophical Quarterly* 38 (1988): 188

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 188–9

<sup>13</sup> Temperance, also known as restraint, is the practice of self-control, abstinence, discretion, and moderation tempering the appetite. Greek σωφροσύνη [*sōphrosynē*] can also be translated as sound-mindedness.

FORTITUDE<sup>14</sup> was assigned to the warrior class and to the spirited element in man; PRUDENCE<sup>15</sup> to the rulers and to reason. JUSTICE<sup>16</sup> stands outside the class system and divisions of man and rules the proper relationship among the three of them.<sup>17</sup>

Plato and Aristotle try to use different terms to mean the same thing namely; moderation and temperance. Though both resonate in meaning and usage, and temperance is sometimes translated as moderation in action, thought, feeling or restraint, they differ in different respects. From the angle of position among the virtues, Plato outlined four cardinal virtues as; wisdom, courage, justice and moderation. He went further to allude that for one to be a good person, all four virtues are needed to harmonize wholeness.<sup>18</sup> Moderation can also be seen to have a close correlative meaning that the existence of one sometimes depends on the existence of the other. Furthermore, besides the position among the four the virtues, moderation serve as an instrument to reaching the virtue of Justice<sup>19</sup> in the division of the human soul according to Plato, there are three parts namely; the rational part in pursue of truth, the spiritual part in pursuit of honour, and the appetitive part in pursuit of bodily pleasure.<sup>20</sup> Wisdom is especially for the rational part, and courage for the for the spiritual part and moderation is needed for the balancing that man needs to be moderate according to Plato.<sup>21</sup> As for Aristotle, the human soul is only divided into two elements namely; rational and irrational. The rational which is distinctive of humans and irrational has two elements; the vegetative causing nutrition and appetitive causing desires. When rationality gets to govern the desires in man, it brings about the virtues from the ambience of contemplation yielding to intellectual virtues. Temperance is one of the moral virtues in Aristotle.<sup>22</sup> According to Plato, harmony between the

<sup>14</sup> Fortitude also termed courage, forbearance, strength, endurance, and the ability to confront fear, uncertainty, and intimidation

<sup>15</sup> Prudence is the ability to discern the appropriate course of action to be taken in a given situation at the appropriate time.

<sup>16</sup> Justice is also considered as fairness, the most extensive and most important virtue; the Greek word also having the meaning of righteousness.

<sup>17</sup> CARR, "The Cardinal Virtues", 186–7.

<sup>18</sup> PLATO, *Republic*, trans. G.M. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1992), 427 c.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 439c – 441a

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 432a

<sup>22</sup> ARISTOTLE, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. D. Ross (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), Book III, chap. 10.

different parts of the soul can be achieved if the rational part rules other parts of the body. Aristotle thinks that what underlines virtues is the mean. By this he suggests temperance as the avoidance of the two extremes of virtue and vice which can be likened to moderation.

#### TEMPERANCE AS A CARDINAL VIRTUE

Temperance is said to be a cardinal virtue which tames our desire for pleasures, and given that the greatest pleasures result from the most natural operations, the primary context for the acquisition of temperance are those areas of our human life which concerns the preservation of the individual and the preservation of the species. Temperance is moderation or voluntary self-restraint.<sup>23</sup> It is typically described in terms of what an individual voluntarily refrains from doing.<sup>24</sup> Five types of self-restraints are considered essential for a moral and ethical life in Hindu philosophy: one must refrain from any violence that causes injury to others, refrain from starting or propagating deceit and falsehood, refrain from theft of other's property, refrain from sexually cheating on one's partner, and refrain from avarice<sup>25</sup> The necessity for temperance is explained as preventing bad karma which sooner or later haunts and returns to the unrestrained.

On the other hand, St. Thomas calls it a "disposition of the mind which binds the passions".<sup>26</sup> The Greek definition of temperance translates to "moderation in action, thought, or feeling; restraint". Temperance is a major Athenian virtue, as advocated by Plato; self-restraint (*sōphrosynē*) is one of his four core virtues of the ideal city, and echoed by Aristotle. According to Aristotle, "temperance is a mean with regard to pleasures"<sup>27</sup> In *Charmides*, one of Plato's early dialogues, the one who possessed '*sōphrosynē*' is de-

<sup>23</sup> Joel GREEN, *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 796.

<sup>24</sup> *Personality, Human Development, and Culture: International Perspectives on Psychological Science*, ed. Ralf Schwarzer (Hove: Psychology Press, 2012), 127.

<sup>25</sup> Maria HEIM, "Differentiations in Hindu Ethics", in *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, ed. William Schweiker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 241; James LOCHTEFELD, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (New York: Rosen Publishing, 2009), 777.

<sup>26</sup> Ryan M. NIEMIEC, "VIA Character Strengths: Research and Practice (The first 10 years)", in *Well-Being and Cultures: Perspectives on Positive Psychology*, ed. Hans Henrik Knoop & Antonella Delle Fave (New York: Springer, 2013), 30.

<sup>27</sup> CARR, "The Cardinal Virtues", 191.

defined in four ways: (1) one who has quietness, (2) one who has modesty, (3) one who does his own business, and (4) one who knows himself. Plato quickly dismisses the three first definitions and argues against (4) that if ‘*sōphrosynē*’ would have been only the property of knowing what one knows or not, then it would be useless without knowledge about other matters.<sup>28</sup>

Temperance is commonly broken down into four main strengths: forgiveness, humility, prudence, and self-regulation.<sup>29</sup> It is typically described in terms of what an individual voluntarily refrains from doing. This includes restraint from retaliation in the form of non-violence and forgiveness, restraint from arrogance in the form of humility and modesty, restraint from excesses such as splurging now in the form of prudence, and restraint from excessive anger or craving for something in the form of calmness and self-control. Although temperance is a virtue highly cherished across cultures and time; and many religious traditions<sup>30</sup> have adapted the practice of the virtue of temperance to better their moods of worship, it remains the common experience of man in all places and times that temperance is not an easy virtue to practice.

In today’s culture, it is a difficult virtue to teach children because of all the negative influences to which they are subjected. Be that as it may, it is a key virtue in a good life and all reasonable attempts should be made to encourage children to practice temperance and understand its importance. Temperance brings order to the concupiscible appetite, and thus to the emotions of love, hate, sensible satisfaction, desire, aversion and sorrow as they bear upon a pleasant good. We have said that temperance moderates the pleasures of the senses. But it also has another function, namely it also moderates the sorrow we may feel at the absence of such sensual enjoyments.

The virtue of temperance is involved with what is traditionally called the concupiscible appetite or striving. An appetite is a striving toward or away from something. This appetite is a division of the sense appetite and is concerned with desiring what is sensibly pleasant, such as food, drink, sex, and so on. Temperance, therefore, concerns itself with the most natural and basic

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 191–2.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas AUGUSTINE, *Virtue of Temperance and Its Vices* (London: Blackburn, 1999), 13.

<sup>30</sup> The Judeo-Christian tradition emphasizes temperance with its admonitions against adultery and covetousness; and self-control being one of the Fruits of the Spirit (NIEMIEC, “VIA Character Strengths”, 11). In this tradition, temperance is a virtue that moderates attraction and desire for pleasure and “provides balance in the use of created goods” (NIEMIEC, “VIA Character Strengths”, 30).



activities we as human being possess.<sup>31</sup> There is, of course, nothing wrong with these basic strivings, urges, or operations. Indeed, without food we would starve. Without drink we would thirst. Without sex there would be no reproduction of our species.

Temperance is not concerned with forbidding or prohibiting our natural tendencies toward food, drink, and sex. It is concerned with moderating and regulating these sensual delights and enjoyments. And, as with all the virtues, it is right reason that becomes the standard for making decisions regarding specific applications of the virtue of temperance. The important point here, however, is realizing that temperance as a virtue has been misunderstood and does not mean the prohibition of sensual activity but the reasonable control of it.

#### INTEMPERANCE AND THE DESTRUCTION OF VIRTUE

Augustine opines that, intemperance has the effect of delivering the intellect over to the service of matter. The result is a loss of interest in things spiritual and intellectual.<sup>32</sup> The kinds of things that appeal to the minds of the intemperate are those that serve the interests of the pleasure appetite, such as novels that do not raise the mind towards eternal themes or truths, but which sink the mind further into the realm of the sensual and material, or films that require little thinking and are dotted at regular intervals with scenes of violence, revenge, and sexual play, or talk shows that preoccupy themselves with trivial matters that have no lasting value. Films, books, or talk shows that deal with eternal and more intelligent themes are no longer popular.

This intemperate disposition also affects one's self-awareness. The intemperate are no longer readily able to transcend themselves, which is required if one is to become critically aware of oneself. Material things are not capable of perfect self-reflection, but only imperfect self-reflection. For instance, a piece of paper can be folded so that one half reflects over the other half. But the whole piece of paper cannot be reflected upon itself entirely, only one part upon another.

But the mind is capable of perfect self-reflection, which is evidence of the immaterial nature of the mind, for I am present to myself in the act of

<sup>31</sup> Douglas McManaman, *The Virtue of Temperance* (Chicago: Light Books, 2007), 5.

<sup>32</sup> Augustine, *Virtue of Temperance*, 44.

knowing something other than myself. I know that I know. Yet I cannot see my entire self or hear myself hearing. But I do know myself in the act of knowing something outside of myself. Now a lack of moral virtue is not going to alter this ability. But intemperance is going to compromise the kind of self-reflection that is not automatic, but which must be cultivated, namely, self-awareness. As one becomes so immersed in the realm of the sensual, one begins, in a sense, to share in matter's lack of perfect self-reflection. That is why the intemperate are most oblivious to their vice, whereas the unjust, on the contrary, are for the most part aware of their injustice, for injustice is in the will, not the concupiscible appetite. Indulging in pleasures seems, to the intemperate at least, an entirely natural thing to do and the most natural end of human existence.

#### THE 'MEASURE' BETWEEN THE VIRTUES OF TEMPERANCE AND THE VICIES OF INTEMPERANCE

Like all virtues, temperance is a relative mean between two extremes, one of excess and one of defect.<sup>33</sup> The mean here will generally fluctuate depending on the individual but, for most of us, the mean will fall closer to the defect than the excess. The reason for this is simple. As human beings we are more inclined toward an excess of food, drink, and sex than toward a defect or lack of these sensual pleasures. Therefore, to keep things in balance, the virtue of temperance, for most of us, will be toward the defect side, which is the weaker side, rather than toward the excess side, which all too often is far more attractive to us.

Let us consider below the 'measures' which account for virtue or vice in relation to temperance.

##### A. GLUTTONY VERSUS ABSTINENCE

The vice of gluttony consists of the inordinate desire for the taste of food sought only for pleasure and not for the good of reason.<sup>34</sup> Food is, of course, necessary for the health of the body and taking pleasure in good food is not wrong. Eating wouldn't be much fun if the food didn't taste good. On the other hand, eating just for the sake of the pleasure involved can lead to an

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 33

excess of eating to the detriment of one's bodily health. Overeating, particularly with some foods, can be downright deadly. Your right reason has to be the judge and what is healthful eating for some people is unhealthy for others. Temperance is believed to combat the sin of gluttony. In contrast, the virtue of abstinence is opposed to the vice of gluttony as it consists of the moderation of the enjoyment of the taste of food under the guide of right reason. It's important to understand that this does not mean total abstinence. Total abstinence is a condition, of course, that wouldn't last long. Total abstinence equals starvation! What is called "fasting" is a type of temporary total abstinence from food and in itself, under certain conditions, could be considered a virtue. There may be a good reason for fasting such as before a medical operation or from some religious motive. If it is carried to an extreme, however, it can easily become a vice.

#### B. DRUNKENNESS VERSUS SOBRIETY

The vice of drunkenness consists of an inordinate desire for drinks or beverages. Drunkenness not only has a moral effect on a person but also has physical and psychological effects. Intoxicating drink can result in the loss of the good of reason and also in the use of reason itself.<sup>35</sup> In contrast the virtue of sobriety is the virtue opposed to the vice of drunkenness. It is the virtue which moderates the enjoyment and use of intoxicating drink. Sobriety is not total abstinence from intoxicating drink, as is popularly thought. It refers to the virtue which moderates the use of intoxicating beverages but, in some cases for some people, the relative mean for the virtue of sobriety is not to drink intoxicating beverages at all. Sobriety is concerned with a right ordering of the appetite toward drink. It is possible, therefore, for one person who drinks and another person who does not drink to be exercising the virtue of sobriety. Since we're discussing the virtue of sobriety and the vice of drunkenness, it may be important to comment briefly on the special matter of alcoholism, which is related to the vice of drunkenness, but is distinct from it. Many authorities now consider alcoholism to be a disease and it well may be; this is not for the moralist to decide. The exercise of the virtues and the practice of the vices is one of voluntary choice. A psychological or physical compulsion beyond the control of an individual has an effect on the moral culpability of that individual. There is a serious question as to what extent an

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<sup>35</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Virtue of Temperance*, 35

alcoholic is responsible for the condition of alcoholism. It may be genetic (or genetically influenced) as some claim or it may be due to other natural causes. Be that as it may, if an alcoholic, knowing full well that once he starts drinking he cannot stop voluntarily, does indeed take that first drink, he is not acting in accord with right reason and, at that point, the concept of vice might well enter the situation. For that reason, the relative mean of the virtue of sobriety for the alcoholic is total abstinence.

### C. LUST VERSUS CHASTITY

The vice of lust consists in using another sexually as a means to an end. It involves engaging in the sexual act outside of the context of the intelligible end of marital communion. Its effects and consequences are many. Like gluttony, lust darkens the mind, and it does so by affecting four acts of the intellect, according to Augustine.<sup>36</sup> Firstly, it affects our ability to apprehend certain ends as good, which Thomas calls blindness of mind.<sup>37</sup> What is evil is regarded as good, and what is good is regarded as evil. One's mind becomes so immersed in the sensual that the criteria one employs to determine the good are no longer intelligible principles, but sense pleasures. For instance, some people have been so affected by lust that they can no longer see marital fidelity as a good. In the past, some have chosen to "open" their marriages as a means of bringing excitement and new life into their relationship. Some have even risked their high position in government not to mention the risk of bringing shame upon their wives and family for the sake of a momentary experience of sexual pleasure. Furthermore, lust affects the intellectual act of counsel, which inquiries into the means to the end, which is a part of prudence.<sup>38</sup> Hence, Augustine Thomas numbers rashness or impetuosity as a daughter of lust, which is the absence of counsel.<sup>39</sup> Thoughtlessness, a vice contrary to good judgment, is also an effect of lust, for thoughtfulness regards others, and as such presupposes an ability to forget oneself at least for a time. But the habit of lust attaches a person to himself and renders the exit-of-self required by thoughtfulness very difficult if not impossible to achieve.<sup>40</sup> In contrast, the virtue of chastity consists of the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> MCMANAMAN, *The Virtue of Temperance*, 57.

<sup>39</sup> AUGUSTINE, *The Virtue of Temperance*, 41.

<sup>40</sup> MCMANAMAN, *The Virtue of Temperance*, 61.

moderation of the emotions relating to sexual pleasure. These pleasures, as Thomas points out, “are more impetuous and are more oppressive on the reason than the pleasures of the palate: and therefore they are in greater need of chastisement and restraint, since if one consents to them this increases the force of concupiscence and weakens the strength of the mind”. Restraint is particularly difficult today, especially for young people. From the point of view of contemporary Western culture, directing the emotions of the concupiscible appetite, as they bear upon the sexual act, according to the order of reason is regarded for the most part as pointless and arbitrary, since fulfilment is popularly understood to mean the fulfilment or satisfaction of desire, as opposed to the proper ordering of desire. The decision to ignore this and make the effort needed to cultivate chastity will nevertheless bring rich rewards to the emotional and moral levels of a person’s life.

#### D. THE VIRTUE OF MODERATION AMONG THE ATYAP CULTURAL HERITAGE IN AFRICA

The Atyap are an ethnic group inhabiting the plateaus of central Nigeria, the same area the ancient Nok inhabited. The Atyap speak Tyap, one of the Benue-Congo languages.<sup>41</sup> The Atyap are commonly called by the Hausas as Kataf.

As noted above, the atyap prefer the use of moderation to refer to the mean between the extremes of vice and virtue. The vice of shame against the virtue of honour among the atyap people can be used to explain the vices against the virtue of temperance. It is highly held by the atyap culture that the discipline of moderation can never be over-emphasised when character which is a quality of honour is invoked. It is significant in promoting human integrity especially in the life of the human being growing in the community. The atyap teaches as a crucial cultural heritage the need to avoid shame and safeguard honour as values in order to enhance the life of wisdom which gives wisdom and respect not only to personality but also honour to the cultural community.<sup>42</sup> For instance, it is considered a shame for elders to behave

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<sup>41</sup> Mia SOGOBA, “Atyap”, *Cultures of West Africa, Glossary*, 9 Dec. 2018, accessed: 8 Jan. 2020, <https://www.culturesofwestafrica.com/glossary/atyap/>.

<sup>42</sup> Signs and Symbols of Honour and Shame could be used to refer to honour or to shame. Like the Yoruba’s in western Nigeria, they practice honour to elders by prostrating flat on the ground, the Igbo will kneel down and the Hausa from the north you have to bow to show respect, all of these are signs of respect and honour. You do that even in the public to be an example to others, on matter who you are and where you find yourself respect is a watchword. Sometime you are severely disciplined for not showing respect. Somehow, it is like ‘tit’ for ‘tat’ you do for your

improperly in the community by indulging in any form of abuse, alcohol addiction, laziness, promiscuity, using unfair means for making gains and taking advantage of weak women. The discipline of moderation among the atyap people helps young people to cherish cultural regulations which help in the cultivation of piety as a symbol of royalty that could dispose the exhibition of credible characters that will dispose the quality of leadership in the community as judged by the stipulations of culture.

Different conducts command either honour or shame among the Atyap. When people deserve honour, it sometimes comes in the form of titles. Titles are marks of honour, excellence and meritorious service which are bestowed on people whether male or female depending on the context, occasion and the event in question. It could be given or bestowed as a rank of honour in the military or police force, and in the community, it could be bestowed through caps of honour (colours) or ties worn across the chest or shoulder while sometimes it is given as trophies or medals of honour. In southern Kaduna cultures and other parts of Nigeria, the titles are categorised for men and women (children are honoured through their parents). Titles differ depending on the person and his/her status in the society. There are titles for high chiefs, the clergy, community leaders and others who perform or act in an outstanding way. There are also, Emirs (Sarakuna in Hausa) and Hakimi a district head to some of the other tribes; who are classified either as first, second or third class chiefs. Under these are also some lesser chiefs who rule smaller communities. They are appointed based on the method adopted by the family, clan or tribe who make up the ruling class (a group set aside of The local leaders are Dakaci, Mai Ungwa or Gora who oversee segments of the community; they are selected or changed on the recommendation of the kingmakers.<sup>43</sup> The atyap people hold one cannot grow to the position of trust and responsibility without the practice of the virtue of temperance. Temperance gives legitimacy to a matured and responsible character in the cultural setting.

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seniors and your juniors also do for you and on it goes as a way of good life for the people. Among the southern Kaduna people you simply bend from your waist as men while women kneel down, it is that of women that is most prominent in the society even today.

<sup>43</sup> Zachariah BULUS TAKORE, "Nurturing honour and shame in stories of the beginning in genesis: biblical perspectives on human dignity according to cultures in southern kaduna" (A Master thesis in theology, Stellenbosch University, Faculty of Theology, Department of Old and New Testament, December, 2013), 35–55.

## CONCLUSION

The measure of temperance is the order of reason. The determination of the mean of reason depends upon the real needs of the present time. It depends upon intelligible human goods (life, truth, beauty, leisure, sociability, religion, etc.). As we said above, the good has the aspect of an end. Human goods are intelligible ends. A good life on the whole is one that is ordered to its proper end, which is the possession of God. The good of virtue consists in that order; for the proper end of a thing is the rule and measure of whatever is directed to the end, and everything within the human person is to be directed to the supreme end, which is the possession, in knowledge and love, of the Supreme Good.

But there are a number of intelligible human goods that motivate the human person who is himself ordered to this supreme end, and the pleasurable activities of eating and drinking are evidently ordered to the intelligible end of human life, that is, its preservation. The rule and measure of sexual desire will also be discovered in the intelligible ends of the sexual powers.

In the case of temperance, therefore, the real needs of this life constitute the rule of reason that makes temperance a virtue.

The mean of virtue here is not a real mean, as in the case of justice, but a mean of reason. The mean of justice is often a real mean, for instance, if one is robbed of twenty dollars, the real mean between excess and deficiency will be twenty dollars, not fifteen, and not fifty. But determining the mean of temperance is not so simple a matter. One cannot say that 8 ounces of Corn Flakes constitute the mean of temperance when it comes to eating a bowl of cereal for breakfast. The mean depends upon the needs of the individual person and his circumstances. A large breakfast may very well be reasonable for the mailman who is required to walk twenty kilometres that day, but it may be excessive for the one who is only required to drive a bus.

Furthermore, the mean of reason in this case does not refer to a measure that is based on the strict needs of this life. St. Thomas understands necessity in two ways. There is the necessity of that “without which something cannot be at all”. But there is also the necessity for something “without which a thing cannot be becomingly”. A life lived in the virtue of temperance, no doubts, brings tranquillity to the soul and harmony in the society.

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THE VICES AGAINST THE VIRTUE OF TEMPERANCE  
AMONG THE ATYAP CULTURAL HERITAGE OF AFRICA:  
A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

S u m m a r y

The place of virtues in moral discussions continues to occupy a central position. This is because moral arguments revolve around virtues and vices. It is taken for granted that virtues produce commendable good moral actions, whereas vices lead to immoral actions that are widely condemned. Virtue ethicists ground their arguments on the assumption that human actions are directly linked to either virtues or vices. But then, to each of the virtues, there exists a degree of excess or deficit, above or below which we begin to speak of counter habitual predispositions, called vices. If this is so, then there should be a way of ascertaining the measure on the basis of which we distinguish between a virtue and its vice. How do we justify the criteria for arriving at such a measure? More so, there is a traditional classification of virtues into cardinal and peripheral virtues: what exact moral features could a virtue exemplify in order to be classified as a cardinal rather than a peripheral virtue? In this article, the Author attempts the analysis of one of the so-called cardinal virtues, precisely that of temperance. He tries to highlight the concept of shame verses honour as viewed and practiced among the atyap cultural heritage in Africa. The goal is modest, namely: to highlight those moral features which justify the classification of temperance as a cardinal virtue and to account for the standard or measure which account for the distinguishing of the vices associated with temperance.

**Key words:** virtue; vice; temperance; moral; moderation; human action; cultural heritage.

WADY ODPOWIADAJĄCE CNOCIE UMIARKOWANIA  
W KULTUROWYM DZIEDZICTWIE SZCZEPU ATYAP:  
PODEJŚCIE FILOZOFICZNE

Streszczenie

W dyskursie moralnym cnoty wciąż zajmują centralne miejsce. Dzieje się tak, ponieważ dyskusje o moralności obracają się wokół pojęć cnoty i wady. Bierze się za pewnik, że wynikiem cnót są czyny dobre moralnie, natomiast wady prowadzą do czynów złych, powszechnie potępianych. Etycy cnót opierają swoje argumenty na założeniu, że czyny ludzkie są bezpośrednio połączone bądź to z cnotą, bądź z wadą. Każdej cnocie odpowiada nadmiar lub deficyt, którego przekroczenie wiąże się z przeciwną jej moralną dyspozycją, nazywaną wadą. W takim wypadku, powinna istnieć jakaś ustalona miara, na której podstawie rozróżniamy między cnotą a wadą. Jakie kryteria obowiązują w przypadku ustalania takiej miary? Co więcej, istnieje tradycyjny podział cnót na kardynalne i poboczne: jakie dokładnie cechy moralne winna mieć cnota, by być określona jako kardynalna? W artykule autor podejmuje próbę analizy jednej z tak zwanych cnót kardynalnych, mianowicie umiarkowania. Szczególny nacisk został położony na pojęciach wstydu i honoru, rozumianych w duchu dziedzictwa kulturowego szczepu Atyap. Celem autora jest znalezienie tych cech, które odpowiadają za ustanowienie umiarkowania cnotą kardynalną oraz podjęcie próby wyznaczenia miary, która odpowiada za wady związane z pojęciem umiarkowania.

**Słowa kluczowe:** cnota; wada; umiarkowanie; moralność; powściągliwość; czyn ludzki; dziedzictwo kulturowe.