



Al-Milal: Journal of Religion and Thought (AMJRT)

Volume 2, Issue 2

ISSN (Print): 2663-4392

ISSN (Electronic): 2706-6436

ISSN (CD-ROM): 2708-132X

Issue: <http://al-milal.org/journal/index.php/al-milal/issue/view/5>

URL: <http://al-milal.org/journal/index.php/al-milal/article/view/87>

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46600/al-milal.v2i2.87>

AMJRT



Kevin Shijja Kuhumba

Title Aristotle's Virtue of Justice as an Ethical Solution to Political Corruption: Analysis and Reflection

Author (s): Kevin Shijja Kuhumba

Received on: 25 April, 2020

Accepted on: 28 November, 2020

Published on: 25, December, 2020

Citation: Kuhumba, Kevin Shijja, "Aristotle's Virtue of Justice as an Ethical Solution to Political Corruption: Analysis and Reflection," *Al-Milal Journal of Religion and Thought* 2 no. 2 (2020): 129-150.

Publisher: Pakistan Society of Religions



ACADEMIA



INDEX COPERNICUS
INTERNATIONAL

EuroPub
Directory of Academic and Scientific Journals

Google Scholar



[Click here for more](#)

*Aristotle's Virtue of Justice as an Ethical Solution to Political Corruption:
Analysis and Reflection*

Kevin Shijja Kuhumba*

Abstract

This paper attempts to discuss Aristotle's concept of justice as an ethical solution to political corruption. The goal of this paper is to present corruption as a form of injustice that deprives the majority from a common good. This paper is very important because it provides ethical solution to grand corruption whereby unscrupulous individuals divert funds meant for development of the entire society into private hands. Due to grand corruption the poor masses are deprived of quality basic needs. The paper focuses on corruption as an immoral act through the lens of Aristotle's ethical and political insights. The virtue of justice in Aristotle's ethical and political works are spelled out. The methodology used in this paper is analytical and applied. It is analytical because it analyses Aristotle's understanding of virtue of justice in his moral theory especially in his book entitled Nicomachean Ethics and justice in his political theory. Finally, the paper makes subsequent applications of Aristotle's virtue of justice in the realm of ethical solutions to the problem of corruption.

Keywords: Aristotle, Justice, Virtue, Political Corruption, Grand Corruption.

* University of Dar es Salaam, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, shijakuhumba@gmail.com.

Aristotle's Virtue of Justice as an Ethical Solution to Political Corruption

Introduction

Political corruption is the kind of corruption that involves rulers and other public officials who run the affairs of a state or a political community. According to Gyekye, postcolonial Africa is undeniably among the worst victims of political corruption.¹ Political corruption is undeniably the most outstanding and resilient problem that has beset and blighted the politics of postcolonial Africa. Political corruption probably constitutes the most serious source of the financial haemorrhage suffered by African nations.² It is undoubtedly the most common cause of the military overthrow of civilian governments in Africa, with the consequent disruption of the democratic political process. Thus, it is the greatest and most serious disease of governments in Africa.³

An escalation of corruption benefits the minority group through injustices which creates a space for discrimination of the majority from the common benefits of the country. In this paper, I treat grand corruption that allows unscrupulous individuals to divert funds meant for development of the entire society into private hands, leading to a society of deprived majority and a filthy rich tiny minority. In this sense corruption is an injustice to the majority by the minority group. The paper will highlight political corruption as an immoral act and at the same time as a form of discrimination to the majority by the minority. Moreover, the second section will analyse Aristotle's theory of justice as virtue and goodness. This will provide a platform to apply Aristotle's moral underpinnings as a solution to the vices of corruption. I consider Aristotle's theory of justice as a virtue with an emphasis on cultivating moral virtues in the people to act justly for ultimate wellbeing leading to collective goodness of the entire society.

The methodology used in this paper is analytical and applied. It is analytical because it analyses Aristotle's understanding of the virtue of justice in his moral theory especially in his book entitled *Nicomachean Ethics* and justice in his political theory. The major aim is to find out whether Aristotle's presentation of the virtue of justice is systematic and similar to both his politics and ethics. Also, the paper will explicate goodness as an ultimate end of virtue of justice. This resonates with Aristotle's claim on

¹Kwame Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience* (Oxford: University Press, 1997), 192.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 193.

practical life through virtuous acts to attain *eudaimonia*. This study claims that the virtue of justice ought to have an ultimate end for human flourishing. This offers us a platform to apply it as a moral solution to corruption as a vice. Based on this claim, this study will have an applied method too; it is not just an exposition of Aristotle's views but also an interpretation of it in the light of our contemporary events in the society in which cases of political injustices such as corruption are on a high increase. Hence, rather than canonizing his thoughts, in this paper, I have also made my reflections and critical assessments on his theory of justice.

Political Corruption: Its Meaning, Categories and Practice

Political corruption is the illegal, unethical, and unauthorized exploitation of one's political or official position for personal gain or advantage.⁴ The word 'political' in political corruption is intended to refer to public affairs: the official goods, affairs, fortunes, agencies, resources and institutions of the state – which is a human community with organized public institutions.⁵ Therefore, political corruption is an act of corruption perpetrated against the state or its agencies by people holding official positions in pursuit of their own private or personal benefits.⁶

Political corruption is often associated with the acceptance of bribes; graft, fraud, nepotism, kickbacks, favouritism and misappropriation of public funds.⁷ Political corruption is manifested in different aspects, for instance; the head of state who fraudulently takes huge sums of money and resources from his/her state; the public official who receives a bribe from a prospective employee in return for a promise to give him or her a job; the official who favours a less qualified relative or family member for a position while rejecting the candidate with better credentials; the police officer who receives a bribe and consequently abandons charges against an arrested person; the customs official who illegally reduces the customs duties on some imported goods in return for some gifts; the government officials in the tax department who reduces the tax burden of a business executive through deliberate miscalculation in return for some kickbacks; the judge who

⁴ Ibid., 194.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 193.

⁷ Ibid.

Aristotle's Virtue of Justice as an Ethical Solution to Political Corruption

perverts the course of justice in favour of an individual who offers him a bribe.⁸ These cases imply that there is an ethical gap in the fight against corruption and this paper argues that Aristotle's theory of justice can contribute to addressing the challenge of political corruption in Africa.

Categories of Corruption as Discrimination

In analysing corruption as discrimination, this paper focuses mainly on grand corruption as connected to political corruption and looting of public funds. However, this does not rule out petty corruption⁹ in any society. Tarimo contends that, in most cases grand corruption and looting is what is normally referred to as political corruption for it involves mostly those in political position/class and those with the power to make policies as well as to enter into contracts with different partners on behalf of the citizens.¹⁰ Tarimo further adds that:

Political corruption (grand corruption) involves administrative circles whereby the ruling class and predatory elite promote personal interest by using the state's authority and sovereignty. In addition to bribes, the expanded role of state activity provides additional opportunities for embezzlement and unlawful enrichment ... misappropriation of state authority, lack of accountability, and lack of exemplary leadership from the public offices.¹¹

With this in mind, now let us turn to categories of corruption which involve discrimination of the majority (citizens) by the minority (politicians, government officers and civil public servants holding key positions in the society). These categories are as follows: corruption-with and corruption-to and corruption-for and corruption-against.¹²

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ According to Report on Corruption in Tanzania termed as Warioba Report on Corruption published in 1996. This report shows petty corruption is prevalent in many public and private sectors. It entails offering of small sums of money in order to get small services performed in a speedy fashion in essence, paying extra over the required amount or for services that are supposed to be free to the public. Example of this is bribes in rendering social services, kickbacks given to the police, licensing officers, magistrates, doctors and clerks; sex demanded from employment seekers and political positions. (Corruption and State: The Warioba Report of 1996).

¹⁰ Tarimo, Aquilino, *Applied Ethics and Africa's Social Reconstruction* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2005), 96.

¹¹ Ibid., 96.

¹² On these two categories of corruption I depend on the systematic presentation done by Ekwueme Evaristus Okechukwu in his article titled Ekwueme, E. Okechukwu, "What Am I Doing When

Corruption-with and Corruption-to

According to Ekwueme, corruption-with and corruption-to are intertwined. For him, corruption-with is that in which the corrupt agent is in collaboration with others to carry out fraudulent or deceptive activities.¹³ In this category, corruption as an immoral act is carried out by a group of individuals guided by greed and self-aggrandizement. For instance, there are numerous fake contracts between African governments and foreign companies. For example, the Tanzanian government spent approximately 133Tzshs billion on external payment arrears to non-existing companies. Also, it is alleged that some companies, notably, MEREMETA Limited, TANGOLD LIMITED AND DEEP GREEN FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED were paid 155Tzshs billion yet they did not deliver any services.¹⁴

Corruption-with exists in different aspects namely: looting and embezzling public funds by members of a ruling political party; corruption by people of the same job position; and corruption done by high -level government officers in collaboration with foreign governments or foreign investors. We cannot, of course, ignore how foreign governments and foreign financial institutions in collaboration with African governments facilitate corruption. In this connection, Umeodum cautions us not to forget the part played by foreign governments. He observes:

It is important not to overlook the role of foreign governments and multinational companies and agencies in corruption and theft in Africa. While the African officials are fully responsible for siphoning the public wealth and resources and passing them to rich countries, some foreign governments are guilty of their direct or indirect collaboration and involvement despite their ceremonious condemnation of the corruption in Africa...Looting of public funds could be

I Am Being Corrupt: An Epistemology Corruption” *Corruption in Africa: A Threat to Justice and Sustainable Peace*, eds. Elizabeth Nduku and John Tenamwenye, 49-67 (Geneva: Globethics.net, 2014).

¹³Ekwueme, E. Okechukwu, “What Am I Doing When I Am Being Corrupt: An Epistemology Corruption,” in *Corruption in Africa: A Threat to Justice and Sustainable Peace*, eds. Elizabeth Nduku and John Tenamwenye, 49-67 (Geneva: Globethics.net, 2014), 61.

¹⁴Mpendazoe, Fred, *Tutashida* (Dar-es-Salaam: Dar-es-Salaam University Press, 2011), 46.

Aristotle's Virtue of Justice as an Ethical Solution to Political Corruption

reduced if people would have difficulty finding welcoming ground for depositing such ill-gotten wealth.¹⁵

On the other hand, corruption-to is that in which corrupt agents misuse public funds and facilities to enrich their families, clans, ethnic groups, religious groups and tribes.¹⁶ Here, we can notice that the minority group practice corruption and in turn deprive the majority of public facilities and goods. As Eker argues, this category is associated with the practice of using the power of office for making private gains in the breach of law and regulations nominally in force.¹⁷ He goes further to show that the sufficient condition for the growth of corruption-to is “deep and unflinching loyalty to one’s family, clan, tribe or religion.’ Such loyalty creates a society of amoral familial relations, religious affiliations, clan and tribe affiliations through maximization of wealth for private gains (ethnic or tribe) at the expense of serving the public good”.¹⁸

Corruption-for and Corruption-against

According to Ekwueme’s analysis, corruption-for and corruption-against are opposed to each other. Corruption-for is usually directed towards the material, political, economic, religious, social, military, intellectual, and bodily benefits of the corrupt agent and other corrupt agents, for, family, friends, kinsmen, village, town, country, institution and organization.¹⁹ Here, corruption cases tend to enrich the few especially corrupt agents and their close allies, at the expense of the majority. Corruption-for/against is not simply an abuse of economic, social, political or religious power, but is for self-interest of the minority group against the majority.

In this category, the corruption-for represents the minority who misuse public funds for their private gains and self-aggrandizement. To have a clear understanding of this category; it is worthwhile to refer to a report by Agenda Participation 2000. The report showed that

¹⁵Umeodum, Henry, “Factors Inhibiting the Realization of Common Good in Africa,” *Journal of Africa Tomorrow* 10 no. 1 (2008), 90-91.

¹⁶Ekwueme, E. Okechukwu, “What Am I Doing When I Am Being Corrupt: An Epistemology Corruption,” in *Corruption in Africa: A Threat to Justice and Sustainable Peace*, eds. Elizabeth Nduku and John Tenamwenye, 49-67 (Geneva: Globethics.net, 2014), 63.

¹⁷Eker, Varda, “On the Origins of Corruption: Irregular Incentives in Nigeria” *Journal of African Studies* 19 no. 1, (1981), 173.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁹ Ekwueme, “What Am I Doing When I Am Being Corrupt: An Epistemology Corruption,” 64.

Tzshs.772, 392,715,400 (Tanzanian currency) was embezzled which could have been used to purchase 3,862 tractors for developing the agricultural sector at Tshs 20,000,000 per tractor.²⁰ This category (corruption-for/against) is prevalent in Africa due to lack of transparency in government transactions especially with regard to natural resources. As Chris Alden comments: “inadequate transparency in managing of African natural resources for the entire benefit of all people is due to exchange of mineral resources between African politicians and the multinational companies. The former (African leaders) acquire dozens of new parliament buildings, presidential palaces and sport stadia, all built virtually overnight by foreign companies (Chinese companies)”.²¹ Here the paper will present two arguments for rapid increase of corruption-for/against. Firstly, Neo-liberal market economy²² dominates management of African natural resources with minimal state intervention. Due to inadequate transparency the voices of the marginalized and those at the bottom of the pyramid are less heard in important fora on management of natural resources. Today, multinationals have become major shareholders of African natural resources while the people living on land where these resources are found have remained poor. Secondly, insufficient transparency concerning the management of natural resources has led to the exclusion of experts from development issues, policy making and natural resources management among others.

²⁰Msafiri, G, Aidan, “Investing in Human Capital: A Pre-requisite for Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction in Tanzania,” in *African Contextual Ethics: Hunger, Leadership, Faith and Media*, eds. Elisabeth Nduku and Christoph Stückelberger, 75-96 (Geneva: Globethics.net, 2013), 40.

²¹Alden, Chris, *China in Africa: African Arguments* (New York: Zed Books, 2007), 3.

²²Neo-liberal market economy which is also referred to as the “neoclassical counter revolution,” it refers to the perspective of economic development which suggested a return to a minimal state interference in the economy after Keynesianism had advocated greater involvement of the state. See, Todaro, P. Michael and Stephen C. Smith, *Economic Development* (Edinburgh: Addison-Wesley, 2009), 16.

How the Minority Group Discriminates the Majority Group through Injustice of Corruption

In considering corruption as a discriminating practice of the majority by the minority it is worth quoting the following: corruption has been aptly described as “a cancer festering within society, enriching a few and impoverishing many.”²³ First and foremost, as a result of grand corruption by the minority (politicians), there is low income for many civil servants. The civil servants are thus forced to find alternative means of making ends meet as “the monthly salary for ordinary people - if they are lucky enough to have a job - is not sufficient to supply the most essential needs of a family.”²⁴

Secondly, chronic Corruption contributes to the deterioration of a country's economy - thus making citizens lack some basic services like health, education, and infrastructure. For example, Tanzania as a country lost Tsh 1.3 trillion or 10% of its GDP by 2007 due to corruption.²⁵

Thirdly, corruption escalates economic inequality in society. As the economist Joseph E. Stiglitz comments on increased economic inequality:

The extreme inequalities in incomes and assets we see in much of the world today harm our economies, our societies, and undermine our politics. Whilst we should all worry about this it is of course the poorest who suffer most, experiencing not just vastly unequal outcomes in their lives, but vastly unequal opportunities too.²⁶

Crucially, the rapid rise of extreme economic inequality is standing in the way of eliminating poverty in Africa. Today, hundreds of millions of people are living without access to clean drinking water and without enough food to feed their families; many are working themselves into the ground just to get by. We can only improve life for the majority if we tackle the extreme concentration of wealth and power in the hands of elites.

²³Nduku, Elizabeth and Makinda Herbert, “Combating Corruption in Society: A Challenge to Higher Education in Africa,” in *Corruption in Africa: A Threat to Justice and Sustainable Peace*, eds. Elizabeth Nduku and John Tenamwenye, 281-301 (Geneva: Globethics.net, 2014), 289.

²⁴Hellsten, Sirkku and Lwaitama, Azaveli, *Civic Ethics Handbook for Development and Reflective Civic Skills for Development*. (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 2004), 48.

²⁵Mpendazoe, *Tutashida*, 50.

²⁶Stiglitz, Joseph, Response to Oxfam Recent Report Titled Even it Up: Time to End Extreme Inequality,” (New York: Oxfam GB for Oxfam International, October 2014), 2.

Economic inequalities are high due to corruption in Africa. For instance, stakeholders in charge of mineral resources dictate the terms of exchange with politicians and government officials without transparency. In exchange, the basic needs of the people such as education facilities, roads, health facilities and social amenities are neglected. It is critical to ask whether the exploration of natural gas in African countries helps to reduce poverty or economic inequality among people, or-else grossly benefiting the multinational companies from developed nations. This sort of exchange has to be fair and mutually beneficial to all parties including the local people as a way forward to curb economic inequalities. This calls for an urgent need for justice and social welfare, for the internalization of the world's resources not only in terms of production but also in the areas of distribution and consumption in the function of the needs of all the world's citizens.

An Analytical Interpretation of Aristotle's Virtue of Justice

In the first section, the discussion was on how grand corruption done by minority groups discriminates against the majority of citizens in accessing their needs to realize good life. This indicates neglect of the common good. In this section, the paper analyses Aristotle's virtue of justice, which will act as a moral solution to corruption as a discriminating vice. It is important to note that Aristotle's works have loomed large in the revival of the political study of personal virtue of justice and how it is relational as leading to the collective good.

Virtue from a Moral Perspective

Virtue ethics is one of the oldest moral philosophies and has gone through development, decline and revival in the past two millennia.²⁷ Virtue ethics has attracted many thinkers in various societies throughout history. These include Confucius in Ancient China, Gautama Buddha in Ancient India, along with Socrates, Plato and, Aristotle in Ancient Greece. These thinkers emphasized principles of the goodness of character and conduct which lead people towards moral excellence.

Virtue comes from a Latin word, *vir* which means man. Thus, virtue means humanness. The corresponding Greek concept is *arête*, which means excellence. Thus, virtue is excellence in a given quality. Virtue is a quality that helps one to perform his/her

²⁷Chan, Lucas, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes: Biblical Studies and Ethics for Real Life* (Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2015), 9.

Aristotle's Virtue of Justice as an Ethical Solution to Political Corruption

functions well and thereby acquire well-being or happiness. Aristotle provides the most classical description of virtue; for him, a virtue is a “disposition to act righteously in a balanced way, without deficiency nor excess”.²⁸ This definition provides three elements: virtues are dispositions, which for Aristotle means that virtues are natural and intrinsic tendencies or inclinations of the character towards the good that lead human beings to act righteously. Secondly, virtues are not external or superficial moral attitudes but internal dispositions of the moral character. Also, according to Aristotle, virtues are related to action and they express moral character through the practice of those good or righteous actions. Virtues develop through the practice of virtuous actions and also those virtuous actions display the true character. The moral character develops through the practice of virtue. Finally, the third element from Aristotle's understanding of virtues is that virtues lead to the process of moral discernment through practical reasoning or the exercise of practical wisdom. Thus, virtues are traits that lead to action through the exercise of moral reasoning. Here, growing in virtue means growing in the ability to choose the desirable middle between the extremes without deficiency or excess.

Virtue ethics is concerned with being (agent-based ethics), centred mostly on the moral character of moral agents to attain goodness and well-being both to themselves as individuals and to the society as well.²⁹ Virtues are “excellences of character that are objective goods, of worth to others [and the self],” and their manifestation is the actualization of qualities that are originally potentialities within a person.³⁰ Thus, virtue ethics calls for our continual growth in our character. Joseph Kotva, a contemporary virtue ethicist, notes that much of modern ethical theory has concentrated on developing rules, principles, goods and exact methods for determining the status of specific acts. In contrast, virtue ethics is more agent-centred and less concerned with the analysis of problematic actions. Virtue ethics moves the focus away from specific acts to background issues such

²⁸Aristotle. *The Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*, Trans. James E.C, Welldon (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), 34.

²⁹Kuhumba, K. Shijja, “The Role of Ethical Education in Building Human Capital: A Pre-Requisite for Tanzania's Industrial Strategy,” *Chiedza: Journal of Arrupe Jesuit University* 19 no. 2 (2017), 65.

³⁰Norton, L. David, “Moral Minimalism and the Development of Moral Character” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy XIII: Ethical Theory: Character and Virtue*, ed. Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling Jr., and Howard K. Wettstein (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 181-182.

as character traits, personal commitments, community traditions, and the conditions necessary for human excellence and human flourishing.³¹

Justice as a Moral Virtue

Aristotle classified the virtues into two distinct categories: the moral virtues and intellectual virtues. The moral virtues are those virtues that perfect the part of the soul which can be controlled or influenced by rationality. Aristotle emphasized eleven moral virtues: temperance, courage, industriousness, generosity, pride, good temper, truthfulness, friendliness, modesty, justice and, pleasantness.³² The intellectual virtues, for Aristotle are those virtues that perfect the part of the soul which itself reasons, that is, the virtues that share the capacity to reason. The five intellectual virtues are: understanding (intuition), science, theoretical wisdom (philosophy), craft (the art of production) and practical wisdom.³³

Aristotle identified justice as “the complete virtue,” and devoted Book V of the *Nicomachean Ethics* discussing what it means to be a just person.³⁴ Aristotle distinguished between universal justice which is the complete or perfect virtue (*Kratiste*) from particular justice, which is a moral virtue on par with courage, temperance among others. Universal justice is concerned with laws abidingness and compliance with rules. The highest function of law in Aristotle’s framework seems to foster the cultivation of the virtues, as the core or at least the condition for private and public happiness.³⁵ For Aristotle, particular justice is the virtue by which a person “lives in right relation with his neighbor”.³⁶ Individuals must recognize each other’s existence and their right to co-exist. Justice occurs where there is reciprocity, that is, where “every person renders to one another that concern which each has for the self”.³⁷ Particular justice is concerned with giving each one’s due and is

³¹Kotva, J. Joseph, *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics: Moral Traditions & Moral Arguments* (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 1996), 5.

³²Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, V:115-122.

³³ Ibid., VI:178-179.

³⁴ Ibid., V:158-176.

³⁵Keys, Mary, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 16-17.

³⁶Porter, Jean, *The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics* (New York: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), 31-32.

³⁷Cassidy, R. Michael, “Character and Context: What Virtue Theory Can Teach Us About a Prosecutor’s Ethical Duty to Seek Justice,” *Notre Dame Law Review* 82, no 2 (2006), 640.

Aristotle's Virtue of Justice as an Ethical Solution to Political Corruption

considered as a merit-based justice. According to Aristotle, particular justice is concerned with what is fair or equal, in other words it is justice as fairness or equality. Particular justice relates to the individual, and in this sense it comprises of a discrete part of general justice as whole virtue. Nevertheless, particular injustice is defined as taking more or less of one's rightful share of something, and in contrast particular justice considers a mean between taking too much and too little.³⁸ It has two forms namely: distributive justice and rectificatory justice. The former is concerned with the fair distribution of honors, public office, and material goods to be distributed between members of a community, whereas rectificatory justice is concerned with rectifying private transactions between individuals.

Justice as a Disposition of Character

Aristotle conceives virtue as a character and accordingly, the virtue of justice is therefore also a state of the character. Concerning justice as a state of character, Aristotle argues that the term is a moral state such that in consequence of it men have the capacity of doing what is just, and do it, and wish it. The virtue of justice is essentially a part of the nature of citizens as ethical-beings and the pre-conditions that citizens live the ethical life. This means that the citizens with the character of justice do just actions. In Book V of *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle puts forward some questions about justice and injustice which indicate justice as a state of the character. He says: "what sort of actions are they concerned with? What sort of mean is justice? What are the extremes between which justice is intermediate? Aristotle proceeds to show that justice is the state that makes us doers of just actions, that makes us do justice and with what is just. In the same way, he shows injustice as the state that makes us do unjust things and wish what is unjust."³⁹

For Aristotle, what brings together characteristic action and characteristic desire of justice is voluntariness and involuntariness. He contends that: "given this account of just and unjust actions, someone does injustice or does justice whenever he does them willingly and does neither justice nor injustice whenever he does them unwillingly".⁴⁰ For a just action involving voluntariness as a drive implies appropriate knowledge, and a person

³⁸Particular injustice as raised by Aristotle is very important in this paper. In this context corrupt agents take what is not due to them guided by greedy, and deny the majority accessibility to the basic needs.

³⁹Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, V:1129a 5-10.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, V: 1135a20.

possessing the virtue of justice carries out just actions neither coincidentally nor by force.⁴¹ This presupposes justice as virtue to be a voluntary act done under one's knowledge and will with a view of enhancing *Eudaimonia* both individually and collectively.

Justice as a character constitutes seeking goodness and essentially a part of the nature of citizens as ethical beings, and the preconditions that citizens live the ethical life. So, Aristotle conceives justice as character which enables human-beings to perform virtuous actions of justice. Just human beings are certain to act justly and want to do what is just; they will actively create justice wherever justice is needed, and also solidly prove in practice they are just, so that their just conduct constitutes the political life of just men. Justice as character not only produces just actions but makes justice come into truth in political science. The virtue of justice prompts moral agents to acquire it through doing just actions. Aristotle avers: "Just as men become builders by building houses, they become just persons by practicing just actions and self-controlled persons by practicing self-control."⁴² Thus, it is only by putting virtue or other moral virtues into practice do the moral agents become just persons or virtuous person. The proper threshold question for virtue ethicists is thus not 'what should one do?' but 'what kind of a person should one be?' This question prompts moral agents to become virtuous in terms of just persons, prudent persons, temperate persons, honesty persons and courageous persons.

Justice as Individual Virtue and Relational Virtue

Aristotle develops a dual nature of the virtue of justice whereby justice is centred on individual well-being and society.⁴³ This dual characteristic virtue of justice can be called a 'non-individual ethical virtue,' in which justice is treated both as an individual virtue and social one.⁴⁴ Just like the other moral virtues, the virtue of justice is an individual one, merely showing the character of a citizen. Individual virtue relies upon either the soul structure of a virtuous man or his receptivity for emotion. Whether the human-being is virtuous or non-virtuous is merely based on his/her virtues. Justice considers that an individual is placed before others and what it focuses on is the way people share the ethical

⁴¹Ibid., V: 1135a25.

⁴²Ibid, II:111-112.

⁴³Xianzhong, Huang, "An Analysis of Aristotle's Virtue of Justice," *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 2, no 2 (2007), 270.

⁴⁴Ibid., 271.

Aristotle's Virtue of Justice as an Ethical Solution to Political Corruption

life, and whether actions of citizens themselves are consistency with the community life. Aristotle shows how the virtue of justice is different from other virtues by arguing:

Justice is complete virtue to the highest degree because it is the complete exercise of complete virtue. And it is the complete exercise because the person who has justice is able to exercise virtue in relation to another, not only in what concerns himself; for many are able to exercise virtue in their own concerns but unable in is what related to another.⁴⁵

The virtue of justice according to Aristotle gains prominence over other moral virtues because it enables an individual to relate with others. Aristotle thinks that the uniqueness of justice is because of meeting another person's good. Aristotle conceives the virtue of justice as coming from the height of community, since the virtuous good life is the common undertaking of the ethical community. Thus, justice must be interpreted to be a character wherein a virtuous life can be achieved.

Goodness (*Eudaimonia*) as an Ultimate End for Justice

According to Aristotle, every being has its characteristic kind of activity, engagement in which constitutes the good for that kind of being. Through their activities, they desire, in the final analysis, one thing for its own sake: the Good.⁴⁶ Good is that which all living beings aim at. Aristotle at the beginning of *NE* points out that: "Every Craft and every investigation, and likewise, every action and decision seems to aim at some good; hence the good has been well described as that at which everything aims."⁴⁷

Aristotle's ultimate end of human life consists in goodness, which he refers to as *eudaimonia*, often translated as happiness or well-being or human flourishing.⁴⁸ For Aristotle, human flourishing is not an external good of the body, but a good of the soul, which is the highest kind of good;⁴⁹ it involves actions and activities of the soul,⁵⁰ which bring their own pleasure with them. At the same time Aristotle recognizes the fact that external goods and bodily goods such as wealth, good birth, friends, and political power as

⁴⁵Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, V:1130.

⁴⁶Hoofstede, Satn, *Understanding Virtue Ethics: Eudaimonia*. (Swansea: Acumen, 2006), 51.

⁴⁷Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I:1094a1.

⁴⁸ Knight, Kelvin, *Aristotelian Philosophy: Ethics and Politics from Aristotle to MacIntyre* (Malden: Polity Press, 2007), 14.

⁴⁹Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I:1098a10.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, I:1098a10-15.

necessary conditions for human flourishing.⁵¹ Aristotle is of the opinion that *eudaimonia* is self-sufficient; this means that by itself it makes one's life choice-worthy, and lacking in nothing.⁵² It is not just one among others, which could not rightly be called 'complete'.⁵³ It must, then include within itself all other goods, and that condition, for Aristotle, is satisfied by *eudaimonia*, and by nothing else.

For Aristotle, the ultimate end of justice is to enhance goodness (*eudaimonia*) both individually and collectively. He views justice as a complete and overarching virtue because it is concerned with the good of another, and it is a relation to our fellow human beings in that it does what is of advantage to others, either to a ruler or to fellow members of society. Legal justice or general justice fosters both personal and common goods. Legal justice takes the excellence proper to other virtues and directs them to promote the good of one's polis.⁵⁴ Further, Aristotle sees the need for justice and friendship to enhance goodness in the political community. He submits that friendship and justice are like Siamese twins as both seem to be about the same things and to be found in the same people for in every community there seems to be some sort of justice, and some type of friendship also. When we reflect upon this thought in the context of ordinary life, we find that Aristotle's suggestion is very sound. This soundness is beautifully captured by Pangle Lorraine Smith thus: "friends often talk as if they have banished the concern for justice as it appears that good friends are characterized by an unwillingness to keep strict accounts".⁵⁵ For Aristotle, therefore, if people are friends they do not need justice, while when they are just they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality. So, besides sharing and having things in common, Aristotle introduces friendship and justice into the context of communities. He claims that in the same way as communities vary in strength depending on the degree of what they share in common, so do friendships. Like justice, Aristotle considers friendship as a virtue that unites people together in the community; thus the ultimate end of justice and friendship is an enhancement of goodness, happiness, well-being, and human flourishing among citizens of the society.

⁵¹ Ibid., I:1099b5.

⁵² Bostock, David, *Aristotle's Ethics*. (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2000), 13.

⁵³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I:1097a30.

⁵⁴ Keys, Mary, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good*, 60.

⁵⁵ Pangle, S. Lorraine, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*. (Toronto: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 79.

Application of Aristotle's Justice as Virtue and Goodness in Combating Political Corruption

Justice as Virtue: A Call for Responsible Leadership

Political corruption entails the mismanagement of public funds through grand corruption. It can be said that the problem is common at the administrative level through top government officials. This implies irresponsible leadership featured by lack of concern for the common good of the entire society. Also, irresponsible leadership is articulated by a lack of moral values and disposition of good character in governance plus lack of sense of accountability, sustainability, and care among government officials in dispensing their duties to the public.

To apply Aristotle's justice as virtue, it is important to remind ourselves what it means to be a just person in Aristotle's moral theory to be more precise, Aristotle explains virtue as a character, the virtue of justice is therefore also a state of a character. Aristotle argues that what all men mean by the term justice is a moral state such that in consequence of it men have the capacity of doing what is just, and do it, and wish it.⁵⁶ The virtue of justice is essentially a part of the nature of citizens as ethical-beings and the pre-conditions that citizens live the ethical life. This means that the citizens with the character of justice do just actions as by the light of nature. Here, we argue that justice as virtue could serve as a foundation for responsible leadership. To bring together justice and responsible leadership as a moral solution to the problem of corruption, it is important to define responsible leadership. According to Deon Rossouw, "responsible leadership is constant personal and institutional reflections of the short and long-term impact of their personal and institutional decisions on society".⁵⁷ Here, justice as a disposition of good character imbues responsible leadership with proper moral reflection and evaluation of decisions and actions undertaken by a moral agent. In our context, the responsible leadership shaped by justice as virtue will enable top government leaders to reflect upon their actions as to whether they constitute fairness, accountability, integrity and care for the majority in their public dealings. This can be achieved by adopting value and ethical education in the

⁵⁶Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, V:1129a5-10.

⁵⁷Cited from Msafiri, G. Aidan, "Responsible Leadership and Governance as Effective Tool in Responding to Climate Change Challenges: An Inter-Faith and Value Based Approach," *Journal of African Tomorrow* 12, no 4 (2012), 45.

institutes of learning, in which people are inculcated with virtues, both theoretical and practical, to have a sense of responsibility and justice.

4.2. Legal Justice and Enhancement of the Common Good

The legal and regulatory frameworks specifically formed to fight corruption can learn from Aristotle's underpinnings on legal justice and the common good. The reason for this is that because legal justice in Aristotle's moral framework designates lawfulness, it deals with the legislation of laws in human society. Legal justice is thought to be the good of another, because it is a relation to our fellow men in that it does what is of advantage to others.

Legal justice regulates all proper conduct within society: in the relation of individuals with one another, and to some extent even the proper attitude of an individual towards himself'.⁵⁸ Legal justice as the highest virtue fosters the cultivation of the virtues, as the core or at least the condition for private and public happiness. On this note, Aristotle considers legal justice as leading to human excellence and promoting the common good. This underpinning can be incorporated as a foundation for legal frameworks to curb political corruption in any society. These laws should aim at the common good. Justice as the virtue prompts the moral agent to act for the sake of another's wellbeing, rather than just working for personal wellbeing. Thus, cases of corruption are unjust and vice, since corruption aims at enriching few individuals at the expense of the majority. In this way, corruption endangers the well-being of society and hinders human flourishing for the majority. So, in curbing corruption there is a need to incorporate legal institutions to formulate laws against corruption. These laws should be based on Aristotle's ethical underpinnings that laws ought to enable human beings to realize flourishing in society.

4.3. Justice as Fairness and Equality: Response to Greed

Grand political corruption in most cases is the result of greed among civil servants. Top government officials and civil servants' appropriate public funds and wealth for their personal or family use. In Aristotle's analysis, greed (*Pleonexia*) depicts unfairness and injustice. Here, corruption as a vicious act is caused by greed and the desire to have more than others. Aristotle associates this particular injustice with a love of gain. Aristotle discusses this in distributive justice whereby one allocates himself/herself more wealth than

⁵⁸Keys, Mary, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good*, 175.

Aristotle's Virtue of Justice as an Ethical Solution to Political Corruption

what is due to him/her. At the same time, greed could facilitate favouritism whereby a distributor allocates more to the favoured group and less to the un-favoured group.

In these two instances, we can connect with our discussion on categories of corruption. In the former a corrupt agent appropriates public wealth to enrich him/herself, this depicts 'corruption-to.' Whereas in the latter, a corrupt agent in distributing wealth allocates more to one group based on favouritism, it is here that corruption-to (favoured group and personal gains) and corruption-against (the unfavoured majority who suffer due to corruption practices) fits into this discussion. Therefore, there is a need to adopt Aristotle's theory of allocating wealth according to what is due to the citizens. This could help to reduce corruption whereby personal gains are given higher priority than the public good.

Justice as an End for Collective Goodness of Society

To employ Aristotle's justice as an end for collective goodness in the society as a moral solution to the problem of political corruption; it is important to indicate that corruption designates breaking, destroying, disrupting, and distorting life; the community, and society. Therefore, corruption threatens the collective good of the society by enriching the minority and making the majority live a life of deprivation. Mostly, the poor are made to suffering due to corruption. We can observe Aristotle's response to the vices of corruption at the onset of *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle argues that human life can be judged good when it is shaped by a relatively consistent pursuit of ends that are themselves good. That is to say, Aristotle's moral reflection advocates for determining the nature of the good that people should seek.

Aristotle's entire understanding of morality is built upon the conviction that a good life is one devoted to the pursuit of good purposes or ends. One of Aristotle's most significant conclusions was that a good life is oriented to goods shared with others – the collective good of the larger society of which one is a part. The good life of a single person and the quality of the common life persons share with one another in society are linked. Thus, the good of the individual and the collective good are inseparable. The collective good of the community should have primacy in setting a direction for the lives of individuals, for it is a higher good than the particular goods of private persons.

Aristotle affirms that justice as relational virtue consists in having appropriate regard for the good of others, so lacking it makes one unable to attain human end, and lack

human excellence.⁵⁹ To attain the collective good from Aristotle's moral theory, society should turn its attention to legislation and political planning.⁶⁰ Here, legal justice serves the purpose of propagating the collective good through effective laws in the society. Based on Aristotle's position, we can rightly say corruption impedes the search for the collective good in society since it enriches the few by discriminating against the majority.

The Necessity of Virtue of Courage in Curbing Corruption

It is worth considering the virtue of courage in curbing corruption. Courage is the virtue that enables an individual to do what is good notwithstanding harm, danger or risk to themselves. For Aristotle, courage is the mean between cowardice and false confidence. Alasdair MacIntyre views courage as related to care and concern for others, "if someone says that he cares for some individual, community or cause, but is unwilling to risk harm ,or danger on his, her or its benefit, he puts in question the genuineness of his care and concern".⁶¹ For the conduct of public officials, the virtue of courage is also implicated in the willingness to sacrifice short term benefits for longer range goals; that is, courage may enable a top civil servant or political leader to strike a balance between the immediate demands and concerns of the public and the common good.

In curbing corruption Africa needs leaders endowed with the virtue of courage to address the common good rather than serving their personal interests or the interests of their allies. In this connection, it is worth mentioning President John Pombe Magufuli, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania. During his first nine months in government, Magufuli managed to initiate robust anti-corruption measures.⁶² Restrictions were put in place on public expenditures such as foreign travel for public officials, expensive national day celebrations, and the use of expensive hotels for government meetings. The money saved from these has been transferred to finance public hospitals and schools. Moreover, numerous anti-corruption operations have been enforced, like the issuing of a 7-day

⁵⁹Nussbaum, Martha, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Madrid: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 351.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 352.

⁶¹MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 192.

⁶²Tanzania Affairs, One year into Magufuli Presidency by Ben Taylor. Available: <<https://www.tzaffairs.org/2017/01/one-year-into-magufulis-presidency/>>, January 1, 2017.

Aristotle's Virtue of Justice as an Ethical Solution to Political Corruption

ultimatum to businessmen suspected of tax evasion; the rooting-out of 16,000 'ghost workers'; and the firing of several civil servants, including the heads of the Tanzania Investment Centre (TIC), Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA), the Tanzania Revenue Authority (TRA), the Tanzania Ports Authority (TPA), the Reli Assets Holding Company Limited (RAHCO), Dar es Salaam City Council, and the Director of the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB).⁶³ Magufuli's direct involvement in these anti-corruption operations including impromptu inspection visits to government offices is unprecedented. All these operations require the virtue of courage.

Conclusion

This paper concludes that Aristotle's virtue of justice is a very important ethical tool to respond to political corruption. For Aristotle virtue of justice is an individual virtue that ought to be realized through just actions and at the same time it is a pre-requisite for a good form of government in society. Therefore, a good form of government ought to focus on the common good through just leaders. So, through Aristotle's ethical and political works corruption tends to ignore the common good in any society.

In my view, fighting grand corruption requires firstly, establishing institutional reforms that are grounded on ethical principles such as accountability, fairness, transparency among others. Secondly, ethics ought to be taught in institutions of learning such as universities and schools. This will equip students with ethical awareness, which later on might be translated into their daily lives while executing their responsibilities in public services. This could include as well as ongoing ethical trainings for public servants and public leaders. Finally, virtue ethics requires constant practices. For instance, being just requires constant practice of just actions, also to be honest and accountable as a virtuous person requires consistency in performing acts which depict honesty and accountability. Thus, emphasis on performing these virtuous acts would help in forming citizens who are honest, accountable, just, and citizens with a moral sense for the wellbeing of others. These efforts would help in the fight against grand corruption.

⁶³Andreoni, Antoni, *Anti-Corruption in Tanzania: A Political Settlements Analysis* (London: SOAS, University of London, 2017), 33.

REFERENCES

- Alden, Chris, *China in Africa: African Arguments* (New York: Zed Books, 2007).
- Andreoni, Antoni, *Anti-Corruption in Tanzania: A Political Settlements Analysis* (London: SOAS, University of London, 2017).
- Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*, Trans. James E.C, Welldon. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923).
- Bostock, David, *Aristotle's Ethics* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2000).
- Cassidy, R. Michael, "Character and Context: What Virtue Theory Can Teach Us About a Prosecutor's Ethical Duty to Seek Justice," *Notre Dame Law Review* 82, no 2 (2006).
- Chan, Lucas, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes: Biblical Studies and Ethics for Real Life*. (Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2015).
- Eker, Varda, "On the Origins of Corruption: Irregular Incentives in Nigeria" *Journal of African Studies* 19 no 1 (1981).
- Ekwueme, E. Okechukwu, "What Am I Doing When I Am Being Corrupt: An Epistemology Corruption," in *Corruption in Africa: A Threat to Justice and Sustainable Peace*, eds. Elizabeth Nduku and John Tenamwenye (Geneva: Globethics.net, 2014).
- Gyekye, Kwame, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflection on the African Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- Hellsten, Sirkku and Lwaitama, Azaveli, *Civic Ethics Handbook for Development and Reflective Civic Skills for Development* (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- Hooft, Satn, *Understanding Virtue Ethics: Eudaimonia* (Swansea: Acumen, 2006).
- Keys, Mary Aquinas, *Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
- Knight, Kelvin, *Aristotelian Philosophy: Ethics and Politics from Aristotle to MacIntyre* (Malden: Polity Press, 2007).
- Kotva, J. Joseph, *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics: Moral Traditions & Moral Arguments* (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 1996).
- Kuhumba, K. Shijja, "The Role of Ethical Education in Building Human Capital: A Pre-Requisite for Tanzania's Industrial Strategy," *Chiedza: Journal of Arrupe Jesuit University*, 19 no. 2 (2017).
- MacIntyre, Alasdair, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).
- Mpendazoe, Fred, *Tutashida* (Dar-es-Salaam: Dar-es-Salaam University Press, 2011).
- Msafiri, G, Aidan, "Investing in Human Capital: A Pre-requisite for Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction in Tanzania," in *African Contextual Ethics: Hunger, Leadership, Faith and Media*, eds. Elisabeth Nduku and Christoph Stückelberger (Geneva: Globethics.net, 2013).
- Msafiri, G. Aidan, "Responsible Leadership and Governance as Effective Tool in Responding to Climate Change Challenges: An Inter-Faith and Value Based Approach," *Journal of African Tomorrow* 12, no. 4 (2012).

Aristotle's Virtue of Justice as an Ethical Solution to Political Corruption

- Nduku, Elizabeth and Makinda Herbert "Combating Corruption in Society: A Challenge to Higher Education in Africa," in *Corruption in Africa: A Threat to Justice and Sustainable Peace*, eds. Elizabeth Nduku and John Tenamwenye (Geneva: Globethics.net, 2014).
- Norton, L. David, "Moral Minimalism and the Development of Moral Character," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy XIII: Ethical Theory: Character and Virtue*, ed. Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling Jr., and Howard K. Wettstein (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988).
- Nussbaum, Martha, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Madrid: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
- Pangle, S. Lorraine, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* (Toronto: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- Porter, Jean, *The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics* (New York: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990).
- Stiglitz, Joseph, Response to Oxfam Recent Report Titled Even it Up: Time to End Extreme Inequality," (New York: Oxfam GB for Oxfam International, October 2014).
- Tanzania Affairs. One year into Magufuli Presidency by Ben Taylor. Available: <<https://www.tzaffairs.org/2017/01/one-year-into-magufulis-presidency/>>, January 1 2017.
- Tarimo, Aquilino, *Applied Ethics and Africa's Social Reconstruction* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2005).
- Tenamwenye, John, "Politics and Corruption in Africa: A Moral Challenge," in *Corruption in Africa: A Threat to Justice and Sustainable Peace*, eds. Elizabeth Nduku and John Tenamwenye, 403-438 (Geneva: Globethics.net, 2014).
- Todaro, P. Michael and Stephen C. Smith, *Economic Development* (Edinburgh: Addison-Wesley, 2009).
- Umeodum, Henry, "Factors Inhibiting the Realization of Common Good in Africa," *Journal of Africa Tomorrow* 10 no. 1, 81-110, (2008).
- Warioba, Joseph, *Corruption and State: The Warioba Report on Corruption in Tanzania* (Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press, 1997).
- Xianzhong, Huang, "An Analysis of Aristotle's Virtue of Justice," *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 2, no. 2, 265-279 (2007).