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A PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE ON THE CARDINAL VIRTUES

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Abstract

Historically, discourse on moral virtue can be traced to the ancient times of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. This notwithstanding, its discussion is yet to wane. Some authors like Kashish Khandelwal have alluded that the current Ukraine-Russia war (if mishandled, may snowball into the third world war) erupted as a result of the inability of both sides to adhere to virtue ethics stipulated in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. There are a lot of virtues, but this research restricts itself to the four cardinal virtues of prudence or wisdom, temperance, fortitude or courage, and justice. This work, although didactic in nature, employs the philosophical method of analysis in its attempt to analyse the aforementioned cardinal virtues. It began with a brief discourse on virtue in general, the meaning of cardinal virtues – as those virtues upon which all the other moral virtues hinge, before narrowing down to the four cardinal virtues. This paper concluded that one is not virtuous if one lacks any of the four cardinal virtues because they are interwoven: whoever would perform an act of virtue must judge rightly about it (prudence); he must have regard for law and render everyone his due (justice); he must endure difficulties and not give way to discouragement (fortitude); and lastly, he must observe moderation and self-control (temperance).

Keywords: Virtue, Cardinal Virtues, Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude, Justice.

Introduction: Virtues in General

Virtue hails from the Latin words: *vir* and *virtus* which respectively translates as "man" and "manliness" in English. It can be defined as a habit that gives both the inclination and the power to do readily what is morally good. In other words, virtue is a habitual and firm disposition to do good; a readiness to do good. It facilitates and makes it easy for a man to

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do good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. "The virtuous person tends towards the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions." Hence, it is not enough to be inclined towards the moral value and to love it, one must also possess the dominion over one's spiritual and sensual drives and passions – in order to be readily able to do the good which one esteems and loves. Consequently, virtues are said to be qualities which benefit the person and increase his capabilities. Virtue is different from virtuous act. "A man can do transient acts in his performance of virtuous acts. If he truly possesses virtue, he will be steady in doing good." Example: a violent man can perform *an act* of gentleness towards a poor man, without possessing the *habit* of this virtue (Composta, 2013, p. 53; Pazhayampallil, 2004, no. 208; Peschke, 2001, vol. 1, p. 343; CCC, nos. 1803-1804).

Furthermore, according to their source (human activity or God), virtues are divided into *natural* and *supernatural*. The former are those virtues which are acquired by human activity, while the latter are those infused by God. Again, according to their object, virtues are divided into *theological* and *moral*. The theological virtues have God as their direct and immediate object – they are supernatural virtues – which include; faith, hope and charity. Contrarily, the moral virtues do not have God as their immediate object. Examples: "giving another his due (justice), moderation in eating and drinking (temperance)." That is to say, while the virtue of justice immediately affects relationship with the neighbour and the world, the virtue of temperance immediately affects the relationship with oneself. This work is inclined not to the supernatural and theological virtues, but to the natural and moral virtues – which are acquired and strengthened at least subjectively by repeated good acts.

Moral virtues, according to Fagothey (2000), enable us not merely to know what to do and how to do it, but they actually assist us in the doing of it. This is because "doing a thing well is opposed to overdoing and to underdoing it, and consists in hitting the mean between excess and defect" (pp. 229-230). This implicates the *Golden Mean* of Aristotle. Hence, in agreement with Aristotle, Fagothey (2000) writes:

Virtue is a habit of choosing the mean between the extremes of excess and defect in action, and this mean is determined by reason guided by the intellectual virtue of prudence. As too much or too little food, sleep, or exercise hurts the body but just the right amount promotes its health, so excess or defect in habit of the soul hurts its health and 'virtue stands in the middle' (p. 230).

For instance, courage is the mean between cowardice and rashness, temperance between overindulgence and insensibility, generosity between stinginess and prodigality, friendliness between surliness and flattery, justice between leniency and severity, truthfulness between exaggeration and understatement (pp. 230-231). Of these moral virtues, there are four on which all other virtues in some way hinge, namely: prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice. They are known as the *cardinal virtues* (Pazhayampallil, 2004, no. 209). The integral (elements), subjective (kinds) and potential (aspects) parts of these cardinal virtues are equally identified. "The integral parts of a cardinal virtue are those things which must come together if the cardinal virtue is to function properly. The subjective parts are the virtues which comprise the different species of a cardinal virtue. The potential parts are the virtues which have something in common with the cardinal virtue, but differ in some respect" (Gratsch, 1985, p. 167).

The Cardinal Virtues

The four virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, as earlier stated are called cardinal virtues (by St. Ambrose) because of the pivotal role they play. *Cardo* in Latin means hinge. “Just as a door depends on the activity of its hinges, so the moral life of man depends on the exercise of these virtues” (Composta, 2013, p. 55; Pazhayampallil, 2004, no. 483; Peschke, 2001, vol. 1, p. 347; Fagothey, 2000, p.231). Therefore, “Cardinal virtues are those fundamental virtues upon which all the other moral virtues in some way hinge and to which they may be reduced.” They may be considered requisites and conditions for the practice of any virtue. Thus, “whoever would perform an act of virtue must judge rightly about it (prudence); he must have regard for law and render everyone his due (justice); he must endure difficulties and not give way to discouragement (fortitude); he must observe moderation and self-control (temperance)” (Pazhayampallil, 2004, no. 483). In summary, Fagothey (2000) writes: “Four virtues have been traditionally picked out as the most important in the ethical order. They are called *cardinal* virtues, from the Latin *cardo*, a hinge, because they are the four hinges on which the other virtues swing” (p. 231). It is appropriate to look at these four cardinal virtues (together with their parts) individually.

Prudence

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) as captured by Pazhayampallil (2004) posits that “prudence is the virtue that disposes *practical reason* to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it; the prudent man considers his steps. Prudence is ‘right reason in action’ writes St. Thomas Aquinas. It is not to be confused with timidity or fear, nor with duplicity or dissimulation. It is called *auriga virtutum* [the charioteer of the virtues]; it guides the other virtues by setting rule and measure.” With the help of this virtue of prudence, one applies moral principles to *particular cases* without error and overcome doubts about the good to achieve and the evil to avoid. Prudence helps one to choose the right means to achieve the right end (CCC, no. 1806; Pazhayampallil, 2004, no. 484). Composta (2013) therefore affirms that “*Prudence is precisely the executive precept of reason, after the examination of the situation*” (p. 57). Similarly, Peschke (2001, vol. 1) asserted that it is imperative in the practice of virtue to rightly apply the demands of moral value to the concrete situation. This, for him, is the task of prudence. In his words:

Prudence disposes a man to discern correctly what measures he must take to realize the exigencies of a virtue as well as possible in the concrete circumstances. Prudence is concerned with the means proportionate to the end, as St. Thomas says. Again, this is a question of right insight into the demands of the moral values.... Because of this general importance of prudence for the practice and perfection of virtue, prudence is not to be regarded as one virtue besides many others, but as an integral element in the structure of every virtue (p. 348).

It is crucial to underscore that *the seat of prudence is the intellect*. Hence, *prudence is regarded as an intellectual virtue*. However, “one who knows only the general principles of acting well is not said to be prudent.” But “the one who knows what is to be done or what is to be avoided *according to right reason in a concrete case* is said to be prudent.” Example; it is a moral principle to be charitable to those in need. But prudence “tells how much, where, when and how to do charity in order that the act of charity may be according to right reason. *Prudence is rightly said to be the virtue that moderates all other virtues* (Pazhayampallil,

2004, no. 484). In addition, Composta (2013) clearly affirmed that “prudence can do without wisdom and science, but not intellect” (p. 58). Again;

The prudent person tries to foresee the future from knowledge of the present and past, and this is the work of reason; hence, prudent resides in the intellect. The work of prudence is to direct our actions to an end; hence it resides in the *practical intellect*. The prudent person knows not only the universal principles of reason, but also the contingencies of life. For example, a prudent person knows that he or she may not endanger human life without sufficient reason (a universal principle), and he or she also knows that driving an auto while under the influence of alcohol endangers human life without sufficient reason (a particular situation) (Gratsch, 1985, p. 168).

Fagothey (2000) adds that:

Prudence is an intellectual virtue by essence, but it enters into the field of the moral virtues by pointing out the golden mean and suggesting ways of securing it. Without prudence fortitude becomes boldness, temperance becomes moroseness, justice becomes harshness. Prudence chooses the right means toward worthy ends; the choice of good means towards bad ends is mere cleverness or shrewdness, but not true prudence. As it is impossible to have the moral virtues without prudence, so it is impossible to have prudence without the moral virtues The importance of prudence in the ethical life cannot be overestimated (pp. 231-232).

The virtue of prudence, Pazhayampallil pointed out, implies the following acts: *Wise Consultation*: Here, the intellect investigates the means to be used in order to act rightly in a particular situation. *Right Judgement*: It is an act of the intellect by which it decides to use a particular means. *Command*: The intellect asks the will to follow its judgement. Command is said to be the most important of these acts. Pazhayampallil (2004) further lists eight essential requirements for the virtue of prudence. These include: (i) Memory – a recalling of the general principle and of the experience of the past. (ii) Understanding or Intuition – a grasping of the real situation. (iii) Docility – a readiness to learn. (iv) Shrewdness – to find exactly and without delay the reason why something is to be done or omitted. (v) Reason – promptitude in deducing and distinguishing the different aspects in the case concerned. (vi) Foresight – a consideration of future events likely to result from the act. (vii) Circumspection – a consideration of all the necessary circumstances. (viii) Caution – the care to avoid evil and other obstacles (Aquinas, as cited in Pazhayampallil, 2004, no. 485). In the words of Gratsch (1985):

St. Thomas distinguishes eight integral parts of prudence which must come together if one is to act prudently. To act prudently, one must remember the past, have a right understanding of the principles at stake, be prepared to learn from others, be capable of making comparison, be an apt reasoner, have foresight, take account of circumstances, and exercise caution (p. 169).

Nonetheless, as already mentioned, the above requirements can equally be placed in the service of evil goals. Hence, “endowment with the good qualities of prudence alone by itself is not yet the certain mark of a virtuous personality” (Peschke, 2001, p. 349). A prudent person, therefore, “is not always able at casuistry, just as, on the contrary, it is possible to find able casuistic men who are most imprudent” (Composta, 2013, p.59). Lastly, negligence,

precipitation, inconsideration, recklessness, and the like indicate a defect of prudence. While, “craftiness, deceit, timidity, pusillanimity may result from an excess of prudence not balanced by other virtues” (Fagothey, 2000, p. 232). Apart from the integral parts mentioned above, there are three subjective parts or species of prudence: personal, domestic and political. “One can exercise prudence in seeking one’s own good (personal prudence) or the good of one’s family (domestic prudence) or the good of the community and state (political prudence). St. Thomas also mentions a fourth: military prudence, which seeks to repel the attack of an enemy” (Gratsch, 1985, p. 169). *Eubulia*, *synesis* and *gnome* are the potential parts of prudence: “There are three potential parts of prudence – virtues in their own right: *eubulia* by which a person is led to take counsel; *synesis* by which a person exercises good judgement in practical matters; and *gnome* by which one judges according to the higher principles of human conduct especially in extraordinary affairs” (Gratsch, 1985, p. 169).

Temperance

The virtue of temperance regulates the desire and use of food, drink, and venereal (or sexual) pleasure, according to right reason. It rules for instance, that one should not eat or drink more than what is necessary for the proper health of mind and body. Temperance equally rules that one should not eat or drink less than what is necessary to fulfil one’s duties. Pazhayampallil (2004) posits thus:

A temperate man is one who is master of himself; one in whom passions do not prevail over reason, will and heart.... We may even say that it is not possible to be a really prudent man, or an authentically just man, or a truly strong [or courageous] man, unless one possesses the virtue of temperance. Temperance is the common denominator of all other virtues (no. 497).

On a similar note, Fagothey (2000) maintains that “Temperance regulates the appetite in the use of sensible pleasure. It moderates our two main drives, towards *self-preservation* and *race-preservation*, and thus acts as a curb on excessive indulgence in food and drink and in the use of sex” (p. 232). Gluttony and lust are variously taken to be the opposing vices of the virtue of temperance. However, abstinence and sobriety, chastity and continence are subordinate virtues of temperance. Conversely, “lack of temperance appears in gluttony, drunkenness, lust, pride, cruelty, vanity.” Whereas, “too much restraint may produce insensibility, stolidity, sullenness, moroseness, fanatical austerity” (p. 233). The integral parts must concur if one is to act temperately. They include: shamefacedness and honesty/decency. The subjective parts of temperance are its species which are differentiated according to the difference of matter or object. They include: abstinence (food), sobriety (drink) and chastity (sex). On another note, Gratsch (1985) identified the following potential parts of temperance: continence, modesty, meekness and clemency (pp. 196-204).

Fortitude

As temperance is a bridle, fortitude is a spur. “Fortitude or courage inclines one to face danger and toil without flinching.” It helps one to face difficulties with equanimity, and to overcome them *according to the dictates of right reason*; for a truly courageous man acts from a rational motive. Death (by instinct) is the most dreadful of all dangers. But fortitude enables one to overcome the abhorrence for death – when it is reasonable to do so. “It frees us from slavery to fear, though it need not take away fear itself. The brave man may act with

fear, but in spite of it faces the danger.” In other words, fortitude suppresses excessive fear and controls recklessness. It implies patience, perseverance and constancy;

It does not consist in one brave act, but is a habit of self-mastery. To rush into peril out of anger, ignorance, or stupidity is no sign of fortitude; the truly courageous man acts from a rational motive, whereby he appreciates the danger while counting it the lesser evil (Fagothey, 2000, p. 233).

Furthermore, while *timidity* is a vice that is opposed to fortitude by defect, *rashness* and *temerity* are vices opposed to the virtue of fortitude by excess (Pazhayampallil, 2004, no. 492). In the words of Fagothey (2000); “Lack of fortitude is shown in cowardice, weakness, timidity, impatience, irresoluteness.” While “boldness, presumption, stubbornness, quarrelsomeness, ruthlessness, are faults of the overbrave” (p. 234). According to Gratsch (1985), since fortitude is a special virtue, it does not have subjective parts; but it does have quasi-integral parts which are required, if one is to act courageously. They are: magnanimity, magnificence, patience and perseverance. The potential parts coincide with the quasi-integral parts. The potential parts of fortitude which include: magnanimity, magnificence, patience and perseverance are virtues in their own right, but they are concerned with lesser hardship than the dangers of death (pp. 193-195).

Justice

Justice, according to McBrien (1994), is derived from the Latin word *ius*, which means “right” (p. 943). Thomas Aquinas understood it as “the firm and constant will to give to each one his due.” In other words, “the notion of justice is based on the fundamental equality of all men. Since all men are fundamentally equal, they should be treated as equals. To treat them unequally is injustice” (Omoregbe, 1993, p. 112). Pazhayampallil quoting Aquinas referred to justice as: “a cardinal virtue which inclines one to give another his due.” O’Callaghan in his *The Meaning of Justice*, gave justice a moral outlook and defines it “as a moral virtue which inclines one to respect man’s personality and to grant him what is due to him as individual charged with the responsibility of his own destiny” (O’Callaghan, 1966, as cited in Pazhayampallil, 2004, no. 512). Strengthening the definition given by Aquinas, Pazhayampallil (2004) imbued justice with a social colouration thus: “Justice is the fundamental principle of the existence and the coexistence of man, as well as of human communities, societies and peoples” (no. 512). This implicates the *vindictory* form of justice as we shall see below. Gratsch (1985) adds his voice: for Aquinas, “justice means giving each one what is his or hers by right. It is a social norm in that it guides the actions of people in their dealings with one another. It is in this sense that the (Catholic) Church has used the term justice to enunciate its teaching on *social justice*” (p. 171).

This research agrees with Peschke (2001, vol. 2) that scholars are not of one mind as to the concept of justice and sometimes differ widely. Nevertheless, he defined justice as “rendering to each man or human community their own and due by right” (pp. 228 & 232). According to him, two basic forms of justice are differentiated in this definition. Firstly, *attributive justice* which leaves to every man what is his own by right and attributes to him what he really is.” Examples include: right to one’s person, to the property which one has acquired, to one’s honour and merited reputation, to one’s discoveries, to impartial acknowledgement of one’s qualifications. The second form is *proportional justice* which “renders to every man what is his due by right, that is, what he does not yet own but what he is entitled to receive as a remuneration, compensation or benefit, or what he is also obliged to accept as a burden in the service of the community.” Again, Peschke continues:

“Since the proportion of goods or burdens due to a person is usually rendered according to the principles of equality in *exchange*, *distribution* and *contribution*, this second form of justice can be termed proportional justice” (p. 232). Moreover, proportional justice (according to Peschke) is subdivided into four subspecies of: commutative, distributive, contributive (legal) and social justice. Different classification or division of justice by scholars notwithstanding, this work only considers the above four together with *vindictive* justice. But before that, it is necessary to state the parts of the virtue of justice in the light of St. Thomas Aquinas:

Thomas treats the virtue of justice and its parts at greater length than any other virtue. The subjective or essential parts of justice are the virtues of distributive and commutative justice. The quasi-integral parts of justice are to do good and refrain from evil. The potential parts of justice include the virtues of religion, piety or filial respect, observance, gratitude, vengeance or vindication, truthfulness, friendliness and liberality (Gratsch, 1985, p. 172).

Commutative Justice

Justice is called commutative, “because in general it is expressed in ‘commuting’ – that is, in giving and receiving” (Composta, 2013, p. 66). It is justice in strictest sense because it exists between equals – “between man and man, or between two independent states, or between man and the state considered apart from any political relation between them. Commutative justice is the basis of contracts” (Fagothey, 2000, p. 234). Pazhayampallil (2004) clarifies thus:

Commutative justice is a virtue which inclines one to give another (physical or juridical person) what is his due as a person distinct and independent from oneself. It is concerned with the exchange of goods and services according to strict equality of values.... Injustice in the strict sense of the word is committed when commutative justice is violated. For example, injustice(sic) in the strict sense is violated when an employer does not pay the employee his wages.... Since rights and claims of commutative justice are mainly based on contracts, it can be called also *contractual justice* (no. 515; Peschke, 2001, vol 2, p. 233).

This is because commutative justice is the aspect of justice that “demands respect for the rights of others and the exchange of things of equal value.” Consequently, cheating, fraud, theft, destruction of other people’s properties, etc., are violations of commutative justice (Omoregbe, 1993, p. 113). “Commutative justice, when violated, carries with it the obligation of restitution. Justice remains outraged until proper compensation has been made to reestablish the balance.” Hence, “one who has injured another by depriving him of something rightfully his is obliged in justice to restore it to him” (Fagothey, 2000, p. 234).

Distributive Justice

This involves the relation of the community to its members. In other words, this aspect of justice regulates the relations of a community with its members. “It demands that benefits and burdens be distributed in the community according to proportional equality.” Distributive justice chiefly applies to the state, though it also, in some way, guides smaller organizations. It is important to note that this kind of justice exists between a superior and his subordinate, and not between equals as that of commutative justice. It is the particular obligation of public officials. A good example is the gradation of direct taxes according to income. But disproportion in the distribution of burdens and partiality in the award of

favours (i.e., favouritism) contravenes distributive justice. Distributive justice, says Fagothey (2000), is not justice in as strict a sense as commutative justice. This is because; “before distribution, the goods do not yet belong to the individuals.” However, to withhold them is morally wrong – “but it is not depriving the individuals something that is actually theirs but only of something they hope to get.” This implies that “distributive justice does not strictly oblige to restitution, unless commutative justice is also involved” (pp. 2234-235). Aquinas’ distinction between commutative and distributive justice is captured by Gratsch (1985) thus:

There are two species of justice, commutative and distributive. Commutative justice is concerned with mutual dealings between two individuals, particularly in matters of buying and selling. Distributive justice has to do with the distribution of rewards, honors and burdens among the members of a community. The equality demanded by commutative justice is absolute and arithmetical; for example, if I owe someone five dollars, commutative justice is satisfied when I repay five dollars, no more, no less. On the other hand, the equality demanded by distributive justice is proportional or geometrical, in the sense that rewards are granted to, and burdens are imposed upon, individuals in accordance with their position, prominence and capability in the community; for example, a just legislature will impose higher taxes upon those who have more resources (p. 174).

Legal or Contributive Justice

Whereas distributive justice is concerned with individual members of a community, legal or contributive justice is concerned with the general good of the community. Little wonder, some regard this form of justice as general justice. It is therefore, a reverse of distributive justice – which is the relation of the community to its members. Whereas legal justice is a relation of the members to the community. It requires each individual to contribute his *proper* share towards the common good. Fagothey (2000) opines:

It is justice in even a less strict sense than distributive, because a man contributes toward the common good by the practice of all the social virtues, and so legal justice begins to shade out into a condition of general social uprightness. Like distributive justice, it does not of itself oblige to restitution, because what the state demands does not actually belong to the state until the state gets possession of it. It is probably called *legal* justice because it shows itself chiefly in law-abiding conduct, but it goes beyond the bare requirements of the written law.... Some have suggested that it be called *contributive* justice, thus pairing it off with distributive justice (p. 235).

In other words, legal justice “demands the observance of all laws aimed at the common good. Since the common good takes precedence over private interest, legal justice demands that the common good should not be sacrificed for the private interest of the individual or for his convenience” (Omogbe, 1993, p. 113). Thus, the violation of any law directed towards the common good is a violation of legal or contributive justice. It must be observed that the cardinal virtue of justice as understood by Fagothey (2000), “comprises commutative and distributive justice, which taken together are often called particular justice.” Legal justice, also referred to as general justice, “is not part of the cardinal virtue because it is too general and implies in its scope all the other virtues that have any social bearing” (p.235). Of course, Fagothey observed that the above fact does not make legal

justice less important. Again, in its very broadest sense, *justice* is sometimes taken to be synonymous with all virtue.

Social Justice

Carl Peter (2006) rightly avers:

In the latter part of the nineteenth century(,) dissatisfaction with the term *legal* grew widespread. It had all too widely been interpreted to mean that justice was enshrined in legal codes. The term no longer conveyed the idea of a general virtue ordering relationships in society towards the common good. Hence a new name was sought Worked out from the social nature of the person and the common good, the concept of *social justice* has established itself as at least a replacement for legal (general) justice (p. 551).

However, scholars are not in harmony as regards the nature, ambit and function of social justice. For some, it is nothing else but merely another expression for legal justice. Authors like Aubert (1975) even equated the two. Others say that it comprises and/or signifies all that legal and distributive justice mean. And others again distinguish social justice from legal, distributive and commutative justice (B. Haring, as cited in Pazhayampallil, 2004, no. 512; Peschke, 2001, vol. 2, p. 234). Both distributive and contributive/legal justice, Fagothey (2000) writes, “are implied in the modern term *social justice*, which some writers consider a separate type of justice, others identify with legal justice, and still others make into a combination of distributive and legal justice, whereby each one both contributes to and receives back from society his proper share” (pp. 234-235). In another twist, Composta (2013) opines:

It is called *legal justice*, if it is supported by the positive juridical order – that is, by civil law. It is instead called *social justice* if the foundation is natural right.... For example, in England in the nineteenth century the daily workday lasted ten or twelve hours and it was a particular regulation of time and space. It was legal justice to require it; but, social justice requires reduction, and not only for England of the nineteenth century, but for every legislation of work in absolute (p.67).

The term *social justice* is a recent concept popularized by Pope Pius XI’s *Quadragesimo Anno*. It refers to the economic welfare of social groups. And as such, “it demands a proportionate share for the social partners in the fruits of their economic cooperation.” When this is applied to the relations between the worker and the employer, it demands “that the worker should have a share in the profits, that he should be paid as a member of a family, that his wage is to be determined, with an eye to the good of the industry, the general economy and the social order.” In fact, social justice aims at establishing the right social order. In other words, it aims at creating economic, political, moral and intellectual conditions which allow the citizens to live a fully human life, i.e., every citizen (within his own field) is bound to contribute to the common welfare. For instance, the wealthy man must use his wealth to further the common good – hoarding up of goods and amassing of property without utilizing them for common good violates social justice. Furthermore, social justice demands a proportionate and equitable distribution of the wealth of a nation among the different groups and regions of a society. Therefore, the concentration of a nation’s wealth and land-ownership in the hands of a few extremely rich families and individuals, while the majority of citizens live in poverty, offends social justice.

Again, those nations favoured by nature are obliged to come to the aid of the less fortunate ones. Such aids are not mere “alms,” but demands of the social order and of peace in the world. It is pertinent to add that every talent and all possessions are bestowed (by God) for the good, not only of individuals, but of the whole of mankind (B. Haring, as cited in Pazhayampallil, 2004, no 512). In the words of Peschke (2001, vol. 2); “... social justice also imposes obligations upon nations in their mutual relations. It binds the economically advanced countries to assist nations in poverty and misery, so that they can live in a manner worthy of human beings” (p. 235). More so, social justice “is a virtue by which men as members of the human society ... give to their fellow men, especially the needy, those things necessary for the maintenance of their live and dignity.” Pope John Paul II adds: “social justice is true only if it is based on the right of the individual” Pope John XXIII in his encyclical “*Mater et Magistra*,” clarifies further:

We are all equally responsible for the undernourished peoples. Hence, it is necessary to educate one’s conscience to the sense of responsibility which weighs upon each and every one, especially upon those who are more blessed with the world’s good... ‘How does God’s love abide in any one who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?’ ... Justice and humanity demand that those countries which produce consumer goods, especially farm products, in excess of their own needs should come to the assistance of those other countries where large sections of the population are suffering from wants and hunger. It is nothing less than an outrage of justice and humanity to destroy or to squander goods that other people need for their very lives (Pope John XXIII, as cited in Pazhayampallil, 2004, no. 517).

Lastly, Pope John Paul II affirms: “overcoming the rigid limitations of commutative justice (i.e., justice in the strict sense), social justice therefore, seeks to subordinate things to man, individual goods to the common good, the right to property to the right to life, eliminating every condition of existence and of work that is unworthy of the human person” (Pope John Paul II, as cited in Pazhayampallil, 2004, no. 517). This is because right social order demands, above all, that one should check excessive ambition, greed, laziness, envy, lust, intemperance and so on. Gratsch (1985) chronologically summarized the Church’s contribution to social justice:

The Church has had much to say about social justice, especially in the twentieth century. In *Rerum Novarum* (1891), Pope Leo XIII stressed the dignity of workers as human beings and their right to a just wage and decent working conditions. He also defended their right to organize labour unions to protect themselves. In *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), Pius XI reaffirmed the dignity of workers and the responsibility of the state to promote the welfare of every member of society. In his *Mater et Magistra* (1961) John XXIII emphasized the global aspect of justice, the right of all to share the fruits of society, and the need to correct economic imbalances. In *Pacem in Terris* (1963), the same Pope listed the right and duties flowing from the dignity of personhood. In *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), the Second Vatican Council spoke of the Church’s unique contribution to the establishment of justice, but it also recognized the contribution of other agencies to this enterprise. Two years later, Paul VI’s *Populorum Progressio* (1967) called upon advanced

nations to assist developing nations not only by economic aid, but also by establishing a more just economic order. His *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971) spoke of many new problems in which justice is a factor: urbanization, youth, the role of women, the victims of change and discrimination, the environment, and unemployment. In the same year, the Synod of Bishops in their document, *Justice in the World* (1971) said that actions on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world are a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel. Finally, John Paul II, in his encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), explained the social implications of the incarnation and redemption (pp. 171-172).

Vindicative Justice

Apart from attributive and proportional justice mentioned above, Peschke (2001, vol. 2) equally made case for the third form of justice, *retributive or vindicatory justice*:

... since the demands of justice are basic requirements for social coexistence and human development, their violation cannot be tolerated but calls for reparation of the injury inflicted. This leads to a last form of justice, retributive or vindicatory justice. It demands indemnification of the injured person and active punishment of the offender (pp. 232-233).

Similarly, Pazhayampallil (2004) understands vindicative justice as “a virtue by which one avenges injuries in a reasonable manner. It is also a virtue which inclines the legitimate authority to inflict suitable punishment on those who transgress the law” (no. 521). Omoregbe (1993) buttresses further: “*Vindicative justice* is that aspect of justice which demands appropriate punishment for an offence, not out of the spirit of vengeance but in the interest of the community or for the correction of the offender, and it should not be more than is deserved by the offence” (p. 113).

Conclusion

It is observed from the foregoing that the four cardinal virtues: prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice, are very much interwoven: “Whoever would perform an act of virtue must judge rightly about it (prudence); he must have regard for law and render everyone his due (justice); he must endure difficulties and not give way to discouragement (fortitude); he must observe moderation and self-control (temperance)” (Jones, 1955, p. 60, as cited in Pazhayampallil, 2004, no. 483). Again, as prudence is regarded not as one virtue besides many others, but as an integral element in the structure of every virtue, justice in its broadest sense is sometimes made synonymous with all virtue. Also, as temperance which cuts across every virtue and thus, seen as the common denominator of all other virtues bridles, fortitude spurs. One is not virtuous if one lacks any of the four cardinal virtues.

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