

PARTIALITY AND ETHICS IN GOVERNANCE: THE NIGERIA EXPERIENCE IN COVID-19 PALLIATIVES REGIME

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Abstract

Actions and inactions of our political leaders, like every other member of our society, is subject to moral consideration since what they do or fail to do affects governance and our quest for social good. However, the morality or otherwise of their actions are not judged outside our moral intuitions if we must be fair to them. As Africans, is our ethical framework best captured and defined in terms of impartiality or partiality? In this work, I defend the idea that African ethics is defined in terms of partiality. Adopting Molefe's defense of partiality as characterizing African ethics but going beyond his characterization of it, I argue that African ethics defined in terms of partiality rests fundamentally on human nature/personal identity. Given that partiality is what defines our ethical framework, and given that our public office holders involved in governance are members of our society, then it is only natural to expect them to live and operate within this ethical framework. Be that as it may, on the particular concerns raised concerning the administration of Covid-19 palliative regime in Nigeria, I argue that strong partialism defeats our quest for a just

society, encourages disunity and separation and above all hampers development because of its proclivity to moral myopism and parochialism. Based on the African maxim of 'charity begins at home', I argue that the administrators can act from the foundational premise of partiality and arrive at impartial conclusions for society's well-being based on the principle of permeable boundaries.

Keywords: African ethics, governance, partiality, impartiality, personal identity, social well-being

Introduction

From the moment the civil society came into being through the collective and conscious will of the people to leave the state of nature in order to secure a better atmosphere for the preservation of their lives and properties, the question of governance became imperative. The people willfully chose the government to help streamline and give direction to their actions and manage the common resources of the people for the common good of all. The people did not surrender their power to the government but rather delegated it to the government for the mutual preservation of their lives, estates and liberties. Thus the government is the creation of the people and therefore a servant to them. This is definitive of true majority rules. As a servant to the people, it is required that the government should be accountable to the people in running the affairs and managing the resources of the people. To this end therefore, the actions and inactions of the handlers of government as members of our society become subject to moral judgement and appraisal in view of the objectives and expectations of the social contract. But this must be done within our prevailing ethical framework. What then defines our ethical framework,

partiality or impartiality? It is necessary for me to state that partiality as I use it here (unless otherwise stated) is partiality of a moderate type (moderate partiality/partialism) hereafter simply called partiality.

Although I defend partiality as defining African ethics, however I do not subscribe to strong/thick partialism (Metz, 2009: 335-356) which is synonymous to selfishness. I argue that African understanding of partiality as that which defines their ethical framework does not support or endorse strong partialism which amounts to moral myopia and parochialism. Given the concerns raised on the administration of Covid-19 palliative regime in Nigeria, I argue that strong partialism defeats our quest for a just society, encourages disunity and above all hampers development. Based on the African maxim of 'charity begins at home', I argue that the administrators of Covid-19 palliative regime can act from the foundational premise of partiality and arrive at impartial conclusions for society's well-being based on the *Principle of Permeable Boundaries* (PPB).

Governance

Every state is faced with challenges from time to time. These challenges may range from politics to economics; from social problematics to religious idiosyncrasies. The effect of these challenges on the generality of the state is determined by the quality of its leadership. The ability of the leadership of the state to harness available natural potentials and resources both internal and external to manage the affairs of the state for the common good of all is what governance is all about. To this end therefore, governance is the exercise of political power to manage a nation's affairs (Ademolekun, 2002, p.

59). Governance is also a process of exercising political, economic and administrative authority, especially over a state. As a concept central to democracy, governance refers to structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment and broad-based participation (Imoukhuede, 2016, p. 4).

From the above explications on the concept of governance, it shows that governance is a human activity and therefore can be practiced badly or well. It is from this perspective that the concept of good governance enters our political lexicon. Thus, as a concept, good governance describes how public institutions and political actors conduct public affairs and manage public resources for society's well-being. When a government is perceived and accepted as legitimate; when it is committed to improving the public and is responsive to the needs of its citizens; when it is able to create an enabling public environment for productive activities and is equitable in its conduct, then good governance can be ascribed to such a government (Lawal and Owolabi, 2012, p. 4).

Given the above indices for good governance, how can we rate successive Nigerian governments especially this present Administration? Nigeria is said to be the giant of Africa perhaps because she is the most populous nation in the whole of Africa and not because of what she brings to the table in terms of good governance. The highly respected Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) 2018 Report shows that Nigeria is at the 33rd position with a low rate of 47.9% and this is particularly worrisome when one considers the abundance of resources the nation is blessed with. These resources are managed by our representatives at various levels.

The question now is, given the fact that these representatives are first and foremost members of various ethnic groups, political parties, geo-political zones et cetera and as it were, defined by certain familial, socio-cultural and religio-political relationships, what should be the best moral intuition and framework that should guide the discharge of their duties and obligations to their constituencies and the Nigerian state at large? This question is posed because whatever happens, the actions and inactions of our political leaders and administrators are expected to be assessed and judged within this ethical framework otherwise we will be unfair to them.

African Ethics and Impartiality

In what way must we define or construe morality – utilitarianism, deontologism, egoism, care ethics et cetera? All these are grouped either as impartiality or partiality. Impartial theories generally suggest and instruct that in our moral judgments and considerations, we must ignore personal relational features such as family ties and communal proximities and that our moral judgments of what ought to be done should not regard such features as being intrinsically significant (Wareham, 2017, p. 129).

One good and famous defense of impartiality in African ethics is provided by Kwasi Wiredu who is equally a very respected voice in African philosophy. Wiredu defends the thesis that African ethics is defined in terms of impartiality through his theory of Sympathetic Impartiality (Molefe, 2016, p. 106; Okeja, 2013, p.14). In other to make sense of Wiredu's sympathetic impartiality, Molefe notes Wiredu's definition of morality according to which what is 'good in general is what promotes human interests and

correspondingly, what is good in the more narrowly ethical sense is, by definition, what is conducive to the harmonization of human interest. Again, in making sense of what morality means for Wiredu, Molefe quotes Wiredu as saying, 'Every Akan maxim about the specifically moral views that I know... postulates the harmonization of interests as the means, and the securing of human well-being as an end, of all moral endeavours' (Molefe, 2016, p.110; Wiredu, 2008, p.334; Wiredu, 1996, p.65; Wiredu, 1992, p.194).

From Wiredu's characterization of morality, it is clear that 'the good' is human well-being and this is the end which must be pursued; but the process and the means of reaching this end, is the harmonization of interests. Human well-being is the intrinsic good which is good in and of itself whereas the harmonization of interests is the instrumental good. What this means is that 'the good' cannot be achieved without harmonizing interests.

Individuals qua individuals have personal interests that are most times conflicting one to another and in order to escape a drifting back to the Hobbesian state of nature, there is need to harmonize these interests for the sake of the common good. Herein lies the morality of the 'harmonization of interests' as a process and means of achieving 'the good'. Selfishness has the capacity to turn a man a wolf to his fellow man thereby tearing the society apart. This makes selfishness, as an attitude, behavior and disposition morally reprehensible. Given this reprehensibility and undesirability of selfishness as a sound moral intuition and disposition, what then is the best principle 'for the survival of human society' and the achievement of its (society) well-being? Wiredu sees 'sympathetic impartiality' as the principle capable of

harmonizing conflicting individual interests ‘for the survival of human society’, a principle which he equates with the golden rule in its different formulations – negatively (do not treat others in ways you would not want them to treat you) or positively (so act towards others in ways you would want them to act towards you) (Molefe, 2016, p.111; Wiredu, 1996, pp.29, 41, 170). Thus said, Wiredu’s sympathetic impartiality shows that in taking a moral decision or making a moral judgment, we must consider the interests of others guided and motivated by sympathy and show neutrality towards our personal interests or the interests of our special relationships.

According to Wiredu, welfarism or human well-being is the end of all moral endeavor (Wiredu, 1996: p.65). Be that as it may, Wiredu does not tell us clearly what he means by human well-being or human interest. That is, when and to what extent does the harmonization of human interest lead to human well-being. Is human well-being guaranteed only when someone has all that she wants and needs (which is practically impossible giving the insufficiency of life itself) or when one is provided with the basic and necessary needs to live a minimally decent life? I think the latter is more of it (Gyekye, 2004; Wiredu, 1992, p.194; 2008, p.334; Metz, 2007, p.331). And if in the distribution of life’s goods, the basic needs are given to all including one’s non-proximate ties (although perhaps they may not get as much as they may wish), then such action though partial, is not morally wrong in Wiredu’s understanding of a morally right action. According to Wiredu, harmonization of interest is a right action which guarantees human well-being. By this, I do not think Wiredu means equalization of interest. Equalization of interest is different from harmonization of interest. While

the former may be difficult to achieve, the latter is more plausible for the achievement of peace, harmony and well-being through consensual compromise and 'give and take' that is a natural feature of life. The lack of conceptual and theoretical clarity in Wiredu's thought warrants this interpretation. This interpretation of Wiredu's 'harmonization of interest and human well-being' suffices based on his principle of sympathetic impartiality. Since for Wiredu, well-being is the end of all moral endeavor, sympathetic (empathetic) impartiality calls on us to identify with other people by empathically *making* the goods go round so as to generate greater happiness for the greater number (utilitarianism). In making the goods go round, there is need to harmonize (and not necessarily equalize) all interest. To this end therefore, I think Wiredu's sympathetic impartialism is an impartialism of a moderate type (to which I subscribe to in this paper) and not impartialism *qua* impartialism which presupposes equalization. In fact, at no point has Wiredu clearly or tacitly suggested that in looking after oneself and relatives, one should endeavor to do more for strangers in order to ground or support impartialism. Partial behavior may provide a means to an impartial ends based on sympathy/empathy and this is made possible through the maxim of 'charity begins at home' (alluded to by Wiredu himself) cum the principle of permeable boundaries. I will explain what this principle entails towards the end of the paper.

Impartiality *qua* impartiality as a moral theory blatantly disregards the moral relevance we naturally attach to our special relationships and their attendant obligations. Any reasoning that claims the irrelevance of one's affiliations is obviously making such relationships lose their moral relevance which we normally and naturally

attach to them and even our dear Wiredu does not subscribe to such impartialism given his recognition of the African maxim of ‘charity begins at home’ (Wiredu, 1992: p.200).

African Ethics and Partiality

Partial theories in ethics uphold the particularity of relationships as being central in moral consideration and decision-making. ‘It is the view that one ought, in principle, to act preferentially towards people in certain types of relationship with one’ (Wareham, 2017, p.130; Metz, 2010, pp.49-58). Partialists are of the view that it is against common sense morality not to recognize and prioritize our special relationships like family and friends in moral considerations and decision-making. It is against this, they problematize impartiality (Molefe, 2016, p.114; Wolf, 1992, p.243). In relation to the individual, ‘family and close relationships unquestionably rank among the greatest goods of life and any conception of morality that is in tension with their maintenance and promotion is unacceptable’ (Wolf, 1992, p.243).

In his defense of partiality as the defining mark of African ethics, Molefe invokes three aspects of African culture (moral intuitions) to ground his defense. ‘These moral intuitions are: 1) the high regard accorded to the family, 2) ancestor veneration and 3) the normative concept of personhood’ (Molefe, 2016, p.113). I will not provide further explanations to the three moral intuitions which Molefe thinks ground partiality in African ethics, for want of space. I must say, at this juncture, that I do not reject these moral intuitions as characterizing partiality in African ethics since I see them as supporting partiality. However, I do claim that partiality is fundamentally located in personal identity

I am aware of the three dominant theories of identity which are those that favour bodily continuity, mental continuity and continuity of consciousness. However, I do not intend to go into the analysis of these theories. Since personal identity bespeaks of the self as it exists through time, I will look at the nature of the self just from a 'person' perspective. Contrary to Reid's (1959, p.55) claim that the body is separate from the self and as such does not count in understanding of the self, I state that the self, its body, its emotions and the expression of these emotions constitute a robust understanding of the person. She is not just a physical body, she is not just immaterial substance and she is not just consciousness. She is a combination of all these though not necessarily in the same degree. The self, its body, emotions and their expressions are like the two sides of a coin which cannot be separated without damaging the coin. Against this background therefore, personal identity consists in what defines a person ontologically and relationally.

In personal identity such questions as who am I? or who are you? What defines me or what makes me who I am, are asked. The answers given to these questions are what define the content of personal identity. Some scholars have argued that at the root of the characterization of personal identity is sociality or relationality (Mbiti, 1969; Menkiti, 2004, p.327; Ikuenobe, 2006, pp.117-131). Mbiti's popular maxim, 'I am because we are and since we are, therefore, I am' is a classic example. In the same vein, Eze recognizes the relational constitution of personal identity when he opines that 'my subjectivity is in part constituted by other persons with whom I share the social world' (Eze, 2008, pp.386-399). Personal identity connotes individuality. Individuality is a world which needs certain

structures to make the individual self-sustaining, self-developing and self-realizing. These structures are made possible by relational and other regarding relationships (Ikuenobe, 2018, p.188-189; Menkiti, 2004, p.327).

There is no autonomy without relationship thus making the line between individuality (autonomy) and sociality very thin. Individuality and relationality are subsets which define identity. Contrary to bodily continuity theory of personal identity which holds the physical body only as that which defines a person's identity, talk about personal identity is broad and multifaceted and extends beyond the limits of one's physical body. This is captured in William James' definition of the 'me'. James (1892) says:

In its widest possible sense, a man's me is the sum total of all that he can call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank accounts. All these things gave him the same emotions. If they wax and prosper, he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down not necessarily in the same degree for each thing... but in the same way for all (p.177).

In the same vein, Belk (1998, p.139-168) captures this idea in his concept of extended self which signifies the identification of one's self not only with one's individual physical and psychological characteristics but also with significant others, groups, or social categories, material objects and places. The significant others are

psychologically important to the individual because he/she identifies with them personally experiencing them as part of the self or part of his/her answers to the q

uestion who am I? Although the significant others are separate from the individual, however, it is because they are closely associated or because of their cognitive interchangeability with one's sense of personal identity, that they matter so greatly (Vignoles, 2017, p.223).

It is necessary to note at this juncture that the consideration of identity upon which partiality is founded does not support strong/thick sense of partialism in terms of selfishness. By this I mean that strong/thick partialism is synonymous to selfishness defined as being concerned excessively or exclusively, for oneself or one's own advantage, pleasure, or welfare, regardless of others. I hold this claim because self-perfection and self-development does not start and end with the self. A situation where the self is hegemonic in terms of prioritizing its goods alone at the expense or neglect of the larger community, can throw up chaos and security concerns that will hamper the comfort, perfection and development of the self. One's identity is constituted by relationships both proximate and distant though in different degrees with different effects. Proximate relationships may have a more direct and overbearing effects on the constitution of one's identity nonetheless, both relationships are conducive and relevant for self-constitution, perfection and development. Guided by this comprehensive complementary rationality, one ought to factor the interest of all *though this may happen* at different degrees. This is the idea of (moderate) partialism. Against this is a strong/thick partialism that prioritizes the good of the self and proximate ties *alone* at the expense or neglect of larger and wider community which is itself

unsupported by the African maxim of ‘charity begins at home’. Charity may begin at home but does not end at home.

In evaluating or judging the actions of a moral agent, consideration must be given to how his/her actions are conducive, first of all, to the perfection of his/her self, then to the well-being of his/her familial and close relationships (the extended self/significant others) and then to the larger community. It is a (moral journey) progression. His/her actions must be in tune with the extended self which is an extension of his/her self. What the above shows is that African ethics is definable in terms of partiality albeit, moderate partialism because of its readiness to acknowledge the being and interests of other extant relationships both proximate and non-proximate. As earlier noted, this position finds support on the popular African moral intuition that says, ‘charity begins at home’. The Igbo version of this moral intuition is for me particularly instructive – ‘a naesin’ulomarammapuozezi’ which literally interpreted means goodness starts from the homestead and reaches outside. Here, ‘home’ refers to the self, extended self, that is, family and friends while ‘outside’ means beyond the familial and close relationships and the goods (whatever this means) must *also* reach the ‘outsiders’ so to speak. Take for instance, if my mother is drowning as well as a stranger and I cannot save both of them at the same time, it will be against common sense, ethically speaking, to try to save the stranger and leave my mother. The *customary* thing to do is to save my mother. This is partialism but there is nothing thick and thus morally reprehensible about it. But if after saving my mother, I have ample or even slightest opportunity to save

the stranger and I call it bluff, then that is thick partialism and thus selfishness and there is no virtue in it.

It is therefore, unacceptable morally speaking (from Igbo/African cultural point in view) to ignore the significance of the ‘home’ and concentrate on the ‘outside’ (in moral consideration and decision-making) in the name of equalizing all moral patients. The Igbo saying, ‘egbelegbenaadamkpurunatii’ attests to this moral unacceptability. *Egbelegbenaadamkpurunatii* literally means ‘a tall palm tree whose kernels do not fall at the base of the tree but fall far from the tree’. The kernel of a palm tree should fall at the base of the tree to be benefited FIRST by those at the base of the tree before being accessed by outsiders. This comment is a direct opposite of the moral maxim, ‘charity begins at home’. Partiality (of the moderate type) therefore recognizes the virtue of community and relationships (as constituents of personal identity) in which relationship of harmony, cooperation, friendship and solidarity are valued and as such pursued while any moral principle that subverts this is seriously frowned at and as such should be avoided like a plague (Wareham, 2017, p.130).

Such moral principle should be avoided like a plague because it amounts to a call for a moral agent to distance herself from who she is and the things that matter to her like friends and family, and occupy a ‘moral’ point of view. Molefe has rejected this insensitivity and rather argues that African moral theory ‘calls a moral agent to be sensitive and responsive to day-to-day issues and challenges so as to develop a particular kind of moral identity steeped in a history characterized by moral victories’ (Molefe, 2016, p.117). A good person, a moral exemplar should not be bereft of this sensitivity. Wiredu

knowingly or unknowingly gives support to the moral intuition of ‘charity begins at home’. Wiredu (1992) writes:

What, then, in its social bearings, is the Akan ideal of personhood? It is the conception of an individual who through mature reflection and steady motivation is able to carve out a reasonably ample livelihood for self, family, and a potentially wide group of kin dependents, besides making substantial contributions to the well-being of society at large. The communalistic orientation of the society in question means that an individual’s image will depend rather crucially upon the extent to which his/her actions benefit others than him or herself, not, of course by accident or coincidence but by design. The implied counsel, though, is not one of unrelieved self-denial, for the Akans are well aware that charity further afield must start at home (p.200).

Very obvious from the excerpt above is Wiredu’s unwitting endorsement of partiality in which he recognizes the difference between one’s special relationships (self and family) and the ‘wider groups (society at large). Wiredu also endorses the view that morality starts with one improving his/her own life (self-development), that of his/her family and then that of the society at large. If it is true that our moral journey MUST start at home, as Wiredu said, then we can see how this leads us farther away from impartiality as such. Impartiality strongly/radically understood (impartiality qua impartiality) means equality

and this in all fairness, is psychologically impossible, whereas partiality moderately understood presupposes equity. Thus, equality and equity mean two different things. Equality means treating everyone the same regardless of need, while equity means treating people differently depending on need.

It will be ethically a wrong action based on harmonization of interest and well-being (in the words of Wiredu) to say for instance, I have the sum of One hundred and twenty thousand naira only and my son's school fees is N100,000.00 and equally my neighbor's son's (who is a stranger) school fees is N100,000.00 and that my neighbor does not have this money, to share this money equally (that is 60-60) between my son and my neighbor's son and then my son fails to write his graduating exam because of my failure to complete the payment of his school fees. Impartiality as such requires me to treat two of them equally regardless of needs but partialism requires that I treat them differently based on need, in this case my son *needs* my attention as his father whose obligation is to take care of him including payment of his school fees for charity ought to begin at home. Wiredu unwittingly supports this (1992, p.200).

In fact, Wiredu's, 'charity further afield must start at home' 'suggests that one owes immediate (MORE) duty to self-development, then to one's family and, if possible, one can benefit a wide group'. According to Molefe (2016, p.105,106) 'partiality as a substantive claim does not entail that we should not help strangers, it is merely asserting that we owe more to those close to us than those who are not'. Further in support of this, Metz states that, "Ubuntu similarly defends the value of partiality – I owe more to family than to non -family- but it also emphasizes the

obligation we owe to strangers, simply in virtue of their humanity” (2010, p.89). None of this understanding of partiality (Molefe and Metz) suggests thick partiality in so far as they acknowledge and harmonize the interests of others beyond the boundary of proximate relationships.

So far, I have tried to argue that partiality defines African ethics and I have tried to locate it on personal identity which is constituted by relationality and community. Partiality as used here does not endorse selfishness or moral egoism in that it accommodates the interests of others. I will, in the next section, further show how it does this through the principle of permeable boundary.

Partiality in African Ethics and COVID-19 Palliatives Regime in Nigeria

The current COVID-19 pandemic ravaging the world and the consequent lockdown of the economy of nations and our means of livelihood have caused poverty, hunger and general suffering across the nations of the earth. As a result, life itself, and the joy of it, is threatened. Nigeria appears to be one of the countries hardest hit by this pandemic, not because of the number of infected persons or number of deaths already recorded, but because of the level of poverty in the country – being the poverty capital of the world. This justifies the palliative regime embarked upon by the government at various levels and by well-meaning Nigerians and organizations. The involvement of the government in the palliative regime is well expected after all the protection of life and the bettering of same is the first and most cardinal element of the Social Contract.

Be that as it may, the palliative regime has generated a lot of concerns, controversies, and debates ranging from the adequacy of the palliatives, who qualifies to get the palliatives, who should or should not be involved in the distribution, modalities for distribution. Other concerns bother on the nature of the palliatives in terms of whether it should come in form of money, or food materials and basic medics and protective equipment like face masks, hand sanitizers et cetera. Some of these concerns are trivial while others are germane. Therefore, I shall not busy myself with all the concerns, controversies and debates of the palliative regime. I shall only engage the concerns of who should benefit from the palliatives and how the palliatives should get to them.

The most vulnerable and the poorest of the poor have been identified as those who should benefit from the palliatives. Certainly the poorest of the poor are many given the level of poverty in Nigeria, but the resources to meet the demands of this population are scarce. Be that as it may, efforts must be made to get the poorest of the poor to benefit without making some well-off and others worse-off. Thus, there must be a just distribution of the palliatives. What really matters, in this case, is that all concerned benefit from the palliatives, the starting point or the modality of distribution notwithstanding. But what moral framework is required to achieve this – partiality or impartiality? Since partiality, as I have argued in this work, is the dominant moral thought operational in our (African) ethics, it may not be out of place for the administrators of the palliative regime to apply this moral framework provided the objective of the regime is not defeated which is making sure the poorest of the poor benefit. Therefore, the concern about *starting* from one's ethnic group, or

using party affiliations or other familial-based relationships, as have been alleged, in the distribution is irrelevant provided the palliatives and the basic needs to guarantee the well-being of the vulnerable eventually get to all concerned.

To argue that using party affiliation, ethnicity, or other familial-based relationships in the distribution is wrong is beside the point. Our administrators are members of our society caught up with partiality as the defining mark of our ethics and it will be unfair, morally and psychologically impossible to expect them to do otherwise (Williams, 1974, p.198). Any moral intuition that asks individuals to sacrifice not only the people and the things that they value but also who they are in the alter of being 'moral' or the equalization of all moral patients is objectionable. The concern should not be about the starting point or the how of the distribution but should be about the availability of the palliatives to those they are meant for. If the modality for distribution starts from one's familial and special relationships (first meeting the interests of special relationships) and goes beyond these relationships by making available the palliatives to all concerned, WITHOUT MAKING SOME WELL-OFF AND OTHERS WORSE-OFF, then there is nothing morally reprehensible about it.

Partiality qua African ethics does not amount to an endorsement of ethical egoism (extreme egoism). Partiality may endorse self-interest but not extreme egoism which is selfishness – there is a difference between self-interest and selfishness (Cottingham, 1981, p.83-89). Self-interest presupposes self-preservation and perfection (which is a moral virtue) and the instinct of self-preservation in humans is fundamental and natural. It is the instinct of self-

preservation and perfection that made possible the birth of civil society. Preservation of individual life in the state of nature was not guaranteed, thus in order to preserve personal lives and of course (for Locke) also personal property, the people came together and agreed to give the (Leviathan, Sovereign, Generalwill) government the power to HELP THEM PRESERVE THEIR LIVES. This is self-interest, a guided self-interest. Guided self-interest makes it possible for man to overcome the risk of overstepping the boundaries of decency set by positive laws, social conventions, conscience and reason (Agada, 2017, p.300). Guided self-interest is relational and other-regarding. It is a morally worthy interest which values sacrifice and limits selfishness.

Be that as it may, as much as the reasons given above in support of partiality (as a defining mark of African ethics) hold, and as much as partiality as an ethical framework is not morally reprehensible, however, our political leaders, in general and administrators of COVID-19 palliatives, in particular, must guard against slipping into strong partialism as this may be counterproductive to the achievement of distributive justice. Indeed, in real life experience, our political leaders at all levels (in Nigeria and most African Countries) do deviate from the ideals of partiality and drift into strong partialism. This is why there is a growing perception that the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari or the APC led Federal Government has been largely nepotistic in the appointments of Heads of Military, Paramilitary and other security Agencies at the Federal level.

It must be stated clearly that although partiality, as a care theory, presupposes that one should treat relationships of dependence and inter-dependence as intrinsically

significant and prioritize their good and well-being, it does not prescribe that this be done at the expense of others outside the boundaries of proximate relationships. Moral goods or well-being is not limited to one's (self) being or special relationships. Though it starts from there, it (certainly) does not end there – charity may begin at home, but does not end at home. It is moral myopism and parochialism that will make (more often than not our political leaders are guilty of this) a political or COVID-19 palliative administrator to concentrate ONLY on familial and special relationships at the expense of the generality of the community. It is MORALLY REPREHENSIBLE TO MAKE YOUR FAMILIAL AND SPECIAL RELATIONSHIPS WELL-OFF AND OTHERS WORSE-OFF. Partial theory endorses the pursuit of the well-being of our special relationships without leaving others worse-off.

The moral intuition of 'charity begins at home' must guide our partialist political leaders and COVID-19 palliatives administrators. 'charity begins at home' accommodates the extant maxims like:
ugbogurumiarammiaranwunye dim (let the pumpkin grow for me and also grow for my co-wife),
emenwakaemereibeya obi adiyamma (literally means what is good for the goose is also good for the gander). Charity begins at home recognizes and promotes the Principle of Permeable Boundaries (PPB). PPB validates the fact that there exists a boundary between those within the circle of special relationship and those outside of them. But the principle also states that the 'boundary(s) in question is permeable which allows the extension of Ubuntu to those who would ordinarily be considered 'outsiders'

(Molefe, 2016, p.113; Ramose, 2003, p.330). Molefe (2016) further captures this very succinctly when he writes that:

A moral agent must be recognized that she is not only her own person and a member of a family; moreover, she is also a member of different communities: her tribe, nations, country, continent and the world. It is for this reason that her moral sensibility and sensitivity must be as wide as the world. Simply put, though she has immediate duty to herself and family, all things equal, she also has duty to the community at large (p.114).

The above excerpt and extant African maxims reject nepotistic tendencies and practices as unethical. Mogobe Ramose who is arguably one of the most prominent expounders of African moral beliefs, as the true son of Africa, better argues for the above claim when he opines that criticisms on the basis of nepotism are legitimate since no single family or community has the right to subsistence by way of denying the same right to others. Corroborating Ramose's thought on this, Wareham writes, "I assume that moral systems that endorse corrupt and nepotistic practices should be avoided if possible, since this endorsement results in a morality that will conflict with the considered judgment of many, if not most, Africans and non-Africans. It is thus unlikely to bring about reasonable moral agreement which is a key aim of moral theory" (Wareham, 2017, p.137).

Therefore, our political leaders and COVID-19 palliatives administrators, in distributing public goods and COVID-19 palliatives, may start, if they so wish, from their special relationships (that is the vulnerable amongst them) but must go beyond this boundary to the general community/country if their actions must be adjudged just. They must neither concentrate ONLY on their special relationships nor make them well-off and others worse-off. In the same view, the church founder/General overseer may start from the members of his/her church who are the vulnerable but must go beyond this boundary to the general public (if he/she has the resources to do so). The argument that the church does not have any obligation towards non-members is faulty. The argument is always that the offerings and tithes to be used by the church to do this is contributed only by members of the church unlike the government which uses the tax payer's money. However, against this mentality, I argue that the church is not an Island. It exists within the community. The government uses tax payer's (who are not members of the church) money to provide security, road networks and other enabling environment which the church enjoys. Therefore, the church, as part of their corporate social responsibility, must give back to the society.

Given the above submission, it is clear then that for the diversion, for instance, of the resources (palliatives) meant for the generality of the public to the benefit of one's familial and special relationships ONLY, amounts to strong partialism which is an example of extreme egoism (and this is against the partiality I have espoused in this work) and this is selfishness. Thaddaeus Metz considers this exploitative and thus unjust in that it entails using an unfriendly and discordant means in respecting the friendly

relations of which one is a part of (Wareham,2017, p.134; Metz,2002, pp.335-356). And treating the generality of the community, the nation or the poorest of the poor in an unfriendly and discordant means is unethical and capable of fanning the embers of disharmony, disunity and clamor for separation and self-determination on a large scale.

Conclusion

In this work, I defended the view that partiality defines African ethics however, I do not support strong partialism due to its proclivity to moral myopism and parochialism which in turn discourages development and encourages disharmony and disunity. In promoting the principle of permeable boundaries, I claim that the African moral intuition of charity begins at home encourages and promotes the dispensing of moral goods NOT ONLY to members of one's special relationships, but also to the generality of the community thereby increasing general happiness which impartial theories moderately conceived and understood purportedly aim at.

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