# Prudence as A Virtue

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## CUNY Ethics & Morality Contest

Submission date:20181105

AAARI CUNY

November 1st, 2018

NYCCTECH, Fall 2018

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#### AAARI

Virtue: Prudence

November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018

#### Prudence as A Virtue

I have always been curious about certain aspects of life, more especially since I have observed that more often, than not, our individual ethics and upbringing influences our choices and can be exploited and misinterpreted to promote self-interest when needed. I am always of the opinion that our individual morals are a rule of conduct one has chosen to abide by, and sometimes dictated by society, like the way virtues were used by the earlier mankind. From time immemorial, our virtues as always and will perhaps continue to influence our choices. What is virtue? Before defining what virtue is, we should "remember that a definition is a description of the salient features of a thing and the thing only" (Carlus Paul). Virtue like religion is an ideal and its emotional character are its most unique element.

The characteristic of virtue is conviction, and its contents is a society's conception which serves for the regulation of conduct; for virtue is the philosophy of historical movements, while a philosophy is the religion of an individual thinker (Carlus). Every individual has their own ideals, what they stand for, what they like and do not like; these personal principles are formed in time covering one's whole life intellectually, emotionally, practically and through life experiences. It is one's conception, what they believe that became their conviction which evolved over time, under different circumstances especially in difficult times with our morality, ethics and prudence providing a feeling of hope and comfort; a product of human nature in

seeking meaning and rationalizing events that befell them and how to adapt it to the future. Prudence requires the pursuit of a more modest, and more morally benign, form of happiness. Requirements for morality in many ways align for the requirements for prudence and the demand or need for morality does not require one to abandon hope for happiness in this life or that one has to be selfless in all ways. Prudence when understood provides the balance for the end of happiness and end of virtue, prudence permits the pursuit of morality in conjunction with the morally permissible aspects of happiness.

As an individual brought up in religious & cultural ways of the Yoruba people and also exposed to the influence of the cultures and beliefs of the Igbo's, Hausa's, Fulani's, Catholics, Baptist, Islam, Ijaws, Ekpoma, Jew's, Ptem to name a few; I know this is the case because I have observed members of these religions and tribes perform different activity even though they hold different views, with a lot of similarities as well. All this religion has a shared belief in one creator or deity, but there are some that overlap. Islam for instance believes in marrying more than one wife, this was the belief of my Muslim paternal grandfather Ogunyen, whom married more than one wife and lived in the ways of this belief in his own way until his dying day; that is not to say that my grandfather didn't live another way has a spiritual herbalist & farmer. When the seasons for certain deities of the Yoruba people came, my grandfather participated in celebrating them through special offerings as custom dictates like his father before him had done. His family were Ogun worshippers in name and faith, they continually paid homage to Ogun because they believed Ogun protected them through hardships, that Ogun saved their first living child from the stretched hands of death after so many still born and miscarriages. With this belief comes the devotion to Ogun and the foresight to plan ahead, and others with similar problems came to believe in Ogun as well, but this was then.

The origin of virtue although unknown, has a purpose. It is the desire that prevents any widespread destructions of beings that make up the immediate society and any systematic implementation of practices that will wreak havoc in its organizations; for this reason, there are general rules that prevents any society from destroying itself. One such rule is: you must not murder, this prevents society from destroying itself. Second rule: you must not steal; this stimulates economic growth. Prudence is both a moral virtue as well as an intellectual virtue, "a prudent person is one who makes good decisions"; not one who is prone to anger or arrogance even though they are learned. Wisdom is mostly applicable to the choices we make as individuals and the actions we took, prudence defines our knowledge of what is good, bad, right and indifferent to life, it helps us understand the most important things in life and to grasp the weight of our choices rationally. Through prudence we can measure our actions in every circumstance and respond to things rationally, it is the outgrowth of birth. Confucianism extols cooperative and harmonious relations, he said "Authority springs from morality, not force". For people to be prudent they also have to be just in their dealings in words and actions.

In my everyday life, I reminisce on the choices I made the day before; by always thinking through my actions carefully, I can guide against making wrong choices that I will later regret. More importantly is to be patient and not overreact to situations. Though not always easy, but always worth it in the end because experience has taught me that if a decision is right it will always resurface at any given time if I exercise patience, self-discipline and good judgement. I resist judging others because - for one, nobody is perfect and who am I to judge? when I do decide to formulate an opinion, I do so knowing full well what the specifics are and the consequences of poor judgement if I misunderstand the facts; while also being cognizant that the information in the "facts" can be skewed. One cardinal personal philosophy of mine is to always

learn from others irrespective of position, age, social status or circumstance. I do the good rather than just knowing the good, for this reason, I let my yes be my yes and my no be my no without mincing words and when I have no idea I let my moral decency guide me in saving so. I believe the virtue – prudence, I chose is an important one to practice in my life because it encompasses all other virtues and the opposite of it is a shameful, sad and incorrect knowledge about things not to be done. It determines the mean in all human actions and situations. As an immigrant, I knew an environment where there are very little help offered by society or government, it is everyone for themselves, people go to sleep hungry and wake up hungry, people pick food from garbage to feed their children, people sleep under bridges next to sewer and drainage system in areas with no drinkable water or electricity besides the moon shining its light and stars glowing; people are only able to bath when it rains, and have to decide whether the little money they have should be spent on drinking water or buy a loaf. This is why I chose the virtue: prudence; I have seen thirst, hunger, pain, suffering and starvation and will use the knowledge of these to guide future choices. I will use it to motivate my desire to do more for people, to be better every day than I was yesterday, to not have to be a talker but a doer as well, being aware that it doesn't really take much to live a comfortable life if one person can extend a hand to another, we can all lift ourselves up.

Practicing this virtue is not without its obstacles though, I start by remembering the word of Ghandi – "be the change you want to see in the world". By so doing, rather than complain about what's broken I resolve in fixing it or advocating for ways in addressing a problem. My interest in climate change as a CityTech student gave me the opportunity to be involved in finding the perfect site for the completed 2015 Solar Decathlon DURA house - a zero energy passive house project that addresses sustainability using natural resources and energy efficiency

from solar & rain fall. In addition to this, my current attempt to contribute to a greener earth and combat climate change led me into the research of a Solar and Rain Catching Canopy & pocket parks with disaster deplorable capability and the use of solar energy to collect rain water, mitigate excess grey water and use permaculture techniques. I focused on creating many more green spaces that are easily duplicable in any part of the world, gardens are self-irrigated using terracotta clay pots embedded in earth or platform structure through osmotic pressure to prevent overwatering. I try my very best to volunteer whenever I can or donate when I can afford to, I act rather than react. Confucius firmly believes that children are the responsibility of their parents and that aging parents are the responsibility of their grown-up children whether it is legally required or not; which it shouldn't be. This is one of the reasons I call my aged parents in Africa at least weekly to hear their voices, seek their wisdom and share my life with them.

Life is full of ups and downs, but the negative and positive events in our lives are what makes life worth living and shaped me into the best I can be and want to be. Knowing full well that nothing is impossible for me to achieve or a mountain too high to climb. I strive every day to believe, hope, have faith and stand strong come what may; I see every obstacle as an opportunity, learning from my mistakes & successes alike and never be dismayed by the obstacles or uneventful outcomes. Ultimately, our virtues must not diminish or become nonexistent, it will always serve many purposes with different reasons to everyone. For better or for worse, our virtues will always influence the choices we make; and with new perspective comes new insight.

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