MORAL VIRTUES AS DEPICTED IN OMOLÚÀBÍ AND JUNZI君子: A PARALLEL ENQUIRY

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Abstract

Human actions over the years have been controversial and sometimes intolerable which has evoked untold consequences. From ancient times, philosophers have propounded thoughts on what exists as the most desirable traits of human. They are all concerned with humans’ right attitude, passions and conduct that govern their actions according to human reason. Nevertheless, certain moral virtues are found and acceptable across all cultures such as the Yorùbá and the Chinese. These moral virtues and values are universally acceptable as standards of human nature and its inherent needs. This work aims to examine the moral virtues as depicted by two cultures in the context of Omolúàbí and Junzi respectively. Data for this research work were obtained through homogenous purpose sampling and content analysis was used to study this work. Certain factors such as temperance, wisdom, justice, patience, perseverance and humility were selected for study in this research work. It adopts Aristotle’s Nicomachian theory of ethics and African theory of ethics which ascertains that people can be virtuous or learn to be virtuous because it’s engraved in certain norms. This paper argues that the virtuous being in Yorùbá and Chinese cultures is one who exhibits practical wisdom, acts rightly, humble and kind to his fellow human beings. It argues that virtue across cultures can be universal and humans should strive to attain or achieve them. It discerns that if humans want to succeed, they must have moral excellence that supports their collective wellbeing. This work concludes that our societies are built on moral standards and humans must strive to attain them.

Keywords: Humans action, attitude, values, traits and moral standards

Introduction

This research work is located within the precincts of moral behavior and values. The concept of moral behavior and values are the fundamental concepts we can use to judge the actions of human beings within a specific time frame. Moral

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behaviour, which leads to moral excellence, is based on a habit or custom and is a virtue implanted in us by nature. Moral behaviour as seen in our right feelings, passions or outward acts is seen as a virtue. When excessive behavior is wrong, deficiency is blamed but the mean amount is praised and right then one can be said to be virtuous. Excessive behaviours like malevolence, shamelessness, envy, adultery, theft, murder among other bad acts are immoral behaviours and cannot be right.  

Philosophers have been engaged with the discourse of virtue and what humans should do and not do. They have dwelt on what sort of persons we should be and what kind of common virtues should be possessed to be termed a virtuous being. Some philosophers like Anscombe & Williams have prophesied that virtues like honesty, kindness, courageousness and compassionate are virtues that all humans must possess while other scholars like Hume & Green have argued otherwise and propelled their own theories. The fact remains that virtues remains the best means for encouraging the right conduct among humans. In fact, the concept of virtue has been a diverse body of thought and this has developed over many centuries, from the era of the Ancient Greek to the period of the Ancient Chinese philosophers. Likewise, many traditions that evolved afterwards have offered their own perception into the notion of virtue. In western thought, virtue has been seen as judging the right action in reference to moral rules or perhaps the consequences of one’s action. Modern moral philosophers diverted their thoughts from the past and they perceive morality to be stemming from the law, with it centrally concerned with defining duties and obligations. Furthermore, the advent of Christianity revealed that morality was an obligation from the divine law. God was seen as the foundation for moral law for humans.

Williams was of the opinion that all these moral systems stated above is used to find general propositions about how to behave, through the ambitious use of the concept of obligation. To him, these moral systems represent ethical considerations which are transferred into a language of obligation. Ethical considerations, moral obligations, norms and virtues are vital requirements for regulating social order in our societies. With inadequate resources, diverse ideological differences, intellectual and moral dissimilarities, segregation and an equal stratum of the human society, clashes and skirmishes are bound to occur. A world filled with conflicts, oppression and hatred needs to be controlled and defined with standard practices and behaviours that will guide the strong from oppressing the weak and the rich from dominating the poor. Moral behaviour as seen in virtues represents the panacea to human limitations and shortcomings in actions, decision-making and social engagements.

Over the years, social systems and cultures have provided for its group survival by restricting the activities of hostile actors that exists within it.
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Perspectives from Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Platonism, and Aristotelianism among others have all proclaimed in their cultures and doctrines that virtues are essential for social order and the flourishing of humanity. The survival of humanity also has its origin in traditional societies like the Yorùbá and the Chinese. Virtue in Yorùbá culture is perceived as Ḣiwà and the characteristics among others are ọrọ sìṣọ (spoken word), îtreìba (respect), inú rere (having a good mind towards others), ọtító (truth), Ḣiwà (good character), akínkanjú (bravery), iṣé (hard work), and ọpọlọ pípè (intelligence). These traits as depicted in Yorùbá culture are the cardinal values of the ideal being (Omolúàbí). In the Chinese culture, virtue (de 德) was postulated by Confucius, it is embedded in traits like benevolence, humaneness and humanity (Ren仁—), Right / Righteousness (Yi 義), Ritual (Li 禮) which are all exhibited by the Confucian gentleman (Junzi君子). Invariably, we can observe that traditional societies have their established values that they have instilled to regulate human behavior and conduct. This study therefore attempts to offer a novel approach to compare virtues across two cultures from two different continents. Hence, we observe that human behavior should be appraised by his actions. The aim of this study therefore is to examine the ethical cultural analysis of the concept of virtue as depicted in the Yorùbá Omolúàbí and the Chinese Junzi. In this vein, this work examines the characteristics and traits of virtue as described by these societies. In pursuing these goals, the study explores (1), the notion of virtue as construed by scholars, philosophers and sociologists. (2) the cultural notion of virtue in the Yorùbá and Chinese culture. (3), the similarities and the differences between the two cultures (4), insights and perspectives into the universal virtues societies should uphold.

Literature Review

The concept of virtue has been a concept that has been widely discussed since the evolution of mankind. Philosophers and sociologists have all delved into what they distinguish as constituting virtue. One thing is obvious; they all proclaim that virtues are necessary conditions for our knowledge of right choice. The notion itself is viewed as a vehicle for ethical knowledge that transcends the limitations of rules or principles. Aristotle claims that making right choices stems from a good character, one must be able to choose the best means to achieve human excellence and happiness. A courageous person makes choices that are neither rash, nor cowardly but that are in between. Finding the proper balance cannot be defined by a specific rule but is a product of practical wisdom that unites intellectual and moral virtues. He noted that there are two kinds of moral virtues and this includes courage, temperance, pride, gentleness, agreeableness,
truthfulness, wittiness, modesty and intellectual virtues which includes theoretical wisdom, science, intuitive understanding, and practical wisdom and craft expertise.

McDowell remarks that virtue is the ability to see situations in a distinctive way, one doesn’t apply universal principles but one acts by being a certain kind of person. To him, virtue is the tool by which principles and rules are applied. Pellegrino & Thomasma infer that virtues play a mediating role between conflicting principles; it enables the agent to apply such principles for the best under the circumstances. They see virtue in the form of prudence, to them it enables one to discern the means which are most appropriate to the good in particular circumstances. These scholars have seen virtues as the dispositions that motivate, rather than determine, the right choices. One acts fairly in accordance with the demands of fairness, one sees it as a personal commitment and this reveals the moral excellence of a person himself.

Hursthouse proposes that virtues are seen when a virtuous agent acts virtuously, that is one who has exercised the vices of virtues. A virtue to him is a character trait that humans need to live or flourish well. MacIntyre sheds more light on this when he expounded that the decisions we need to make in particular cases cannot be warranted entirely by the appeals to rules, yet we must make them. Therefore, these decisions are warranted by something in addition to rules and this something is called virtue. Kihlbom says that virtue is when one apprehends the reason that something is morally right or wrong. To him, what makes some actions morally right are the factors that the virtuous person perceives it in the situation as morally relevant. Rand observes virtue as the act by which we gain and or keep virtues, it must be justified in terms of the requirement of life and happiness. He further identifies certain virtues such as justice, pride, integrity and honesty as fundamental traits of virtues. Aristotle reacts on the notion of acting morally right and proclaims that virtue is a state of character concerned with choice, lying on a mean, that is the mean relative to use; this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom will determine it.

Akinboye believes that a virtuous person acquires and put into proper use skill, knowledge and wisdom in order not only to improve himself but for the betterment of the society. Gbadegesin argues that Yorùbá moral virtues are depicted in metaphysical equality and social reciprocity while holding on to the notion of justice. Abimbola invokes the core norms of the Ifa corpus to be acceptable values in any society; they are respect, devotion to ones parents, truthfulness, honesty, faithfulness and loyalty. Omotosho affirms this also by saying that in traditional Yorùbá societies, exceptional virtues are seen when one acts justly and is vast in the use of òwe, àrokò and eșe ifà. Fayemi & Adeyelure offer new insights by claiming that Yorùbá moral virtues are embedded in proper
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education, either formal or informal teaching process.\textsuperscript{20} For the traditional Yorùbá society, virtues are crafted in education and it is a life-long process. Thus, such virtue is seen as any act or experience that has an integrative and formative effect on the mind, character, skills, physical and spiritual abilities of the individual to enable him/her live effectively and responsibly in the society. Fagunwa sees Yorùbá virtues as love, morality, temperance, honesty, honor, bravery, justice, prudence, and fortitude.\textsuperscript{21} Omeregbe suggests that virtues are seen through the excellences of one’s character. To him, they include courage, honesty, temperance, humility, chastity before marriage, respect for elders, right use of words, mastery of the language and use of proverbs and idioms.\textsuperscript{22} He further states that the consistent behaviour of a person with these traits makes him virtuous in most traditional societies like Africa.

Russell professes that humans should endeavour to uphold and imbibe characters such as honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, respect, integrity, responsibility, competence and tactfulness.\textsuperscript{23} Good character, therefore, is described as the inherent complex of attributes that determine a person’s moral and ethical actions and reactions. Chan draws out the doctrine of Confucius as regards virtue, Confucius once said that benevolence, humaneness and humanity (Ren仁), Right / Righteousness (Yi義) and Ritual (Li禮) are the cardinal virtues of human life. They are fundamental traits of individual’s character and are deeply upheld by a moral person. Mencius remarked, that what distinguishes a superior man from other men is what he preserves in his heart namely, benevolence and propriety. The benevolent man loves others. The man of propriety shows respect to others. He who loves others is constantly loved by them. He who respects others is constantly respected by them.\textsuperscript{24}

Confucius in the Analects further expounded on the notion of virtue and he claimed that if one can practice the five things everywhere under the Heavens, then he can be seen to be virtuous. He said courtesy, tolerance, good faith, diligence and kindness are key traits of a virtuous being under the heavens. He further asserted if one is courteous, he is not treated with rudeness, if one is tolerant, one wins over the multitude, if one is endowed with good faith, others give him responsibilities, if one is diligent, one obtains results and if one is kind, one is competent to command others.

From the above, we can see that Western, African and Asian scholars have all considered the notion of virtue and have propounded various characteristics and traits as the embodiments of a virtuous being. Virtue can be seen as human principles and societal rules that assist humans to live happily and flourish excellently. They include good reasoning, courageousness, foresightedness, prudence, integrity, honesty, practical wisdom, benevolence, diligence and kindness.
Moral Virtues by Omolúàbí

The Yorùbás have values which are seen as institutional ideas to be upheld in their society; to them these values should direct and guide the existence of humans and their interactions. Oral tradition and inculcating moral virtues through generations has been a way of life for this cultural group of Nigeria. They adopt oral traditions because they prescribe, describe and modify the character of their people. They choose the mean in their actions as good examples to be exemplified and adopted. Good character through moral uprightness and good conduct are traits upheld by this culture. A person with good morals that exhibits good character (iwà) is called Omolúàbí. The traditional culture of the Yorùbá over the years has focused on how to educate and inculcate moral values to their children with the central hope that they can be Omolúàbí.25

Omolúàbí therefore signifies someone that is good, virtuous, well-mannered and cultured. He is used as the standard to measure morality and immorality acts within the society. He is a person of self-respect, esteem and honor who combines all virtues together and displays them accordingly.26 He is thus seen as a good and dependable person who is unique and standout exceptionally well at all times. Omolúàbí is seen as an honest person who has respect for old age and who is loyal to his parents and local traditions. His honesty is also displayed in public and private dealings, sociability, courage and many other moral virtues that bind the society together.27

Abimbola identifies the characteristics of an Omolúàbí, he is someone who is endowed with órò síso (spoken word), itèrìba (respect), inú rere (having a good mind towards others), òítító (truth), iwà (good character), akíŋkanjú (bravery), iṣé (hard work), and opolọ pipé (intelligence) with iwà (good character). He sees iwà (good character) as the essence of his being and in ethical terms one can use it to assess his behaviour. A lot of scholars agreed with Abimbola, while others tried to depict the character of an Omolúàbí, Bewaji proclaims that he has the character of suuru (patience), iwòm-tún-wònsì (moderation) and akin (courage) amongst others. The concept of suuru (patience) as a Yorùbá virtue (iwa) is seen when they say suuru ni baba ìwà (Patience as the forbear of character). They strongly believe that Omolúàbí must never be in haste, but he must allow things to naturally unfold. He also believes that he avoids excesses while observing that too much of everything has strong repercussions. Furthermore, Omolúàbí is the person who is courageous due to life challenges or ups and downs of the society. He endures and hopes to overcome such challenges in due time.28
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Thus, the ideas of Omolúàbí are found in Yorùbá people’s oral tradition which comes in form of proverbs, myths, folklores, tales and some symbolic legacies. In Ifá literary corpus, Omolúàbí can be connoted as the basis of societal ethics and norms. Abimbola affirms that Omolúàbí is embedded in the famous Yorùbá maxim of Ìwá l’esin (character is the ultimate religion) of as revealed through Odù Ifá literary corpus in Ogbe Otura and Ogba Alara.29

Ìwál’esin (Character is the ultimate religion)
Ìwá nikan l’osoro o (Character is all that is requisite)
Ori kan ki’buru l’otu Ife (There is no destiny to be called unhappy in Ife city)
Ìwá nikan l’osoro o (Character is all that is requisite)30.
Ìwá pele l’ókun aye fi’ro peti l’owo eni (Gentle character is that which enables the rope of life to stay unbroken in one’s hand).
O da ‘fa fun Orunmila (So, declares the oracle to Orunmila).
Ti o nlo fi Ìwá gba okun aye l’owo okan-le-ni-‘irinwo imale (Who by means of gentle character was going to win the rope of life from the four hundred and one divinities) (Abimbola, 1975).31

Omolúàbí from above, is seen to be enshrined in Yorùbá oral literature, tradition and culture, likewise, it shows how character is connoted or perceived in relations to moral values, ethical relationship, divinity, religion, godliness, aesthetic value and epistemology.

**Moral Virtues by Junzi**

Chinese culture cannot be divulged from ethical values and norms which they have focused on through their philosophers and scholars. The aim of morality and a good human being has been the central focus of their thoughts over the years. Confucius, the Chinese philosopher, has been in the forefront of discourses about human conduct in politics, education, government and social structures. His notion of a model for the society to follow designed the character of Junzi who is seen as the Superior man, gentleman or nobleman. His perception was that Junzi was an embodiment of ren which means, humanity, humaneness, goodness, benevolence and love for mankind. Confucius said, if one removes ren from a Junzi, then wherein is he worthy of the name? The Junzi does not deviate from ren for an instant. Though he may be hurried or in dire straits, he always cleaves to ren. Ren according to Confucius expresses the perfect virtue of a human being, it means humanity or humanness. Confucius said ren is the greatest virtue of a Junzi and when he was asked about it, he simply said it means to love others. To him, when Junzi has ren he has the root of all other virtues such as filial piety, brotherly
respect, loyalty and faithfulness. Confucius says a man of humanity loves men and he does not do to others what he does not want others to do to him.\textsuperscript{32}

The notion of Junzi has also been examined by other scholars, Yu infers the notion of personality to connote Junzi, to him, is the ultimate achievement of culture through optimization of Chinese cultural beliefs and values.\textsuperscript{33} Huang sees Junzi as differing from western notions of Saint and the personality of the gentleman.\textsuperscript{34} To him Junzi in Chinese culture means developing ones personality and character. He therefore opined the personality mode to characterize Junzi’s belief as the ideal person. Gao draws from the notion of good and bad to define Junzi, he says the Junzi does good deeds; the xiaoren does evil.\textsuperscript{35} He asserts that Junzi (the good person) and the xiaoren (the bad person) notion is not a difference between two stable social groups, but that which is exhibited by a momentary slip in our innermost being. In other words, human action is differentiated through the good or bad behavior of individuals. Yao opines that Junzi are the people with outstanding moral conduct, the opposite of whom he calls ordinary people, although he also refers at times to xiaoren.\textsuperscript{36} For Yao, Junzi are particularly strongly disposed towards being supportive of others, are skilled in such endeavors, and are therefore the people who set up, organize and lead groups, and who produce and allocate public goods. In Yao’s vision of a Junzi-led society, ordinary people also learn the necessary basic morality and conduct for the maintenance of social order, and through participating in public affairs develop from “private citizens” into “public citizens.” In this way, a social fabric is gradually developed that has the Junzi at the center, surrounded in ever-increasing circles by family, community, workplace, region, country, and ultimately the whole world, and which maintains a social order that is diverse yet harmonious. All these scholarly works still draws inspiration from Confucius, he asserts that Junzi achieves all these through his virtues of character strength and mind discipline. His humaneness is seen when he is warm, amiable, courteous, frugal and deferential. Confucius explains more about humaneness as exhibited by Junzi, he practices five virtues such as courtesy, tolerance, good faith, diligence and kindness. All his life, Junzi remains loyal, righteous and sincere to people around him and his friends. Junzi chooses his friends; he makes friends with the upright, the sincere and the experienced.\textsuperscript{38} Junzi is, indeed, an exemplary example and model for the society, Julia Ching describes Confucius Junzi as a prophet who “would speak in the name of the Classics, the sages and of Heaven” and who represented a kind of lay priesthood whose dignity and mission flowed more from their education and merit than from any personal charisma. Hall and Ames argue that personal cultivation and communal responsibility for Confucian Junzi are mutually implicative and that Junzi is “a qualitative term denoting someone who has an ongoing commitment to
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personal growth as it is cultivated and expressed through political leadership.” In Chinese political thought, the Junzi have become a special class, representing a commitment to the service of state and society in the name of the common good. In fact, Confucius changes this sociological term into a moral term, expecting moral behavior of those who called themselves Junzi. Junzi, a special class in society, have become the backbone of both political and social evolution and the preservation of the values of Chinese culture and civilization.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted in this study is heterogeneous due to the multivariate analysis it offers towards the notion of virtue. Western theory of Ethics as postulated by Aristotle and African theory of ethics as proposed by Ayantayo are applicable for this work.

Aristotle theory of moral virtue asserts that every art and every enquiry, action or pursuit is thought to aim at some good, and for this reason, the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim. But a certain difference is found among ends, some are activities, others are products apart from the activities that produce them. Where there are ends apart from the actions, it is the nature of the products to be better than the activities. Virtue is of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual virtue owes its birth and its growth to teaching which requires experience and time while moral virtues comes about as a result of a habit. To him, moral virtues arises in us by nature and he argues that nothing exists by nature can form a habit contrary to its nature. Things that comes to us by nature are acquired through the potentiality and we later exhibit the activity and as such the virtues we get by first exercising them.

Virtue to him also connotes we act according to the right rule; this is a common principle for human conduct to achieve happiness. Happiness according to him is “Eudaimonia” which means well-being, happiness, flourishing and success. Aristotle asserts that even when acts are in conformity with virtues, it doesn’t connote that they are done temperately or justly. He therefore claims that a person must have knowledge to act in conformity with virtues, he must choose the acts for their sakes and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character. Aristotle therefore draws a conclusion, that actions are just and temperate when they are such as the just of the temperate man would do, but it is not the man who does these that is just, but the man who also does them as just and temperate man would do them.

African human ethics by Ayantayo infers that human virtue is exemplified by positive values such as justice, gratitude, honesty, loyalty, truthfulness, tolerance, responsibility, hard work, cooperation, generosity, kindness, fidelity to one’s duty. He argues that the society expects one to apply
all these values to all social rectors. He also claims that African ethics are highly religious and it cannot be deviated from human ethics. To him, truth telling, honesty, justice and partiality are embedded in human nervous system. Therefore this is ethical in their character as it is highly commanded by supernatural beings and divinities. He draws out examples from God in Christianity, Allah in Islam and Obatala Yoruba traditional religion. The divine command makes the human ethical standards as direct punishment by them if violated and engraves them as also a ritual in the religious ethics. For example, Christian Ethics, Islamic Ethics and African Traditional Religious Ethics are mainly permeated in Nigerian society. Christian ethics appropriates the Qur’an, Islamic theology and prophetic traditions in which the saying and deeds of Prophet Mohammed are recorded and referred to also as the trodden path.45  

Aristotle’s Nicomachean theory of ethics and African human ethics are relevant to this research work. Aristotle’s Nicomachean theory of ethics depicts that human actions should be aimed at some good and to achieve this goodness we must have the intellectual and moral traits. He identifies that virtues can be attained by constant teaching or experience over time or as a result of a constant habit. Aristotle also affirms that virtue can be seen as acting in accordance with the right principle that governs any society. To him, it is only when we act in this manner can we flourish and achieve success. He stresses the need to act justly and be self-controlled in all our endeavours. On the other hand, African human ethics argues that certain values have been incorporated into the nervous system of Africans and as such they are compelled to act in a virtuous manner and demeanour. Human virtue permeates their spheres of human activity and its enshrined in their daily practices as encapsulated in their religious practices and rituals. He argues that Africans are cautious in their acts because sometimes they are conscious that there might be negative consequences which will emanate from unwrongful behaviour or attitude.

Methodology  
This research work adopted data from two major sources, Omolúàbí and Junzi as represented in the sociocultural literature as regard moral virtues were downloaded from the Nigerian and Chinese databases through the internet. Relevant information as related to the subject matter were selected through the homogenous random sampling method. Moral virtues as seen in moral traits, behaviour and vices were downloaded from the internet, specifically on how they facilitate moral excellence, social order, and happiness while regulating human conduct. Hence, the data for this work were considered representative of how they expedite bodily and soul excellence as engraved in the moral behaviours of Omolúàbí and Junzi. The data used for this work were analyzed through content
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analysis that aimed to compare traditional values as embedded in their societal customs whose main objective is to develop people with ethical considerations, moral obligations, norms and virtues.

Discussion

Yorùbá and Chinese traditional cultures have focused on the concept of morality over the years. They have propounded ethical theories for their societies to regulate human conduct and action, the aim is to ensure that humans live in accordance with societal rules and principles. Omolùàbí and Junzi connote one and the same thing in different cultures. They connote the perfect, moral, ideal, virtuous and the well-mannered being.

Firstly, both Omolùàbí and Junzi exemplify the notion of morality in their traditional societies; they are individuals who have the capability to distinguish between right and wrong behaviors and their actions are based on their cultural ethics and values.

Secondly, Omolùàbí and Junzi are seen as the well cultured individuals in the society, they set standards for others to follow. As stated above, Omolùàbí is endowed with órò sìsọ (spoken word), ọtọrìba (respect), iñu rere (having a good mind towards others), ọtítọ (truth), iwà (good character), akinkanju (bravery), iṣẹ (hard work), suuru (patience), iwọn-tún-wọnsi (moderation), akin (courage), ọpọlọpọ pípé (intelligence) with iwà (good character). Likewise, Junzi is bequeathed with such characteristics as humaneness, filial piety, brotherly respect, loyalty, faithfulness, tolerance, frugality, modesty, good faith, diligence and kindness.

Thirdly, these ideal individuals both have the moral virtue of patience. In Yorùbá culture, it is seen as the forbearer of human character, it helps one to restrain and withhold himself when acting and in Chinese culture patience guides human action and decision in the appropriate manner. Patience is a human virtue that facilitates empathy and assists humans to understand others appropriately.

Fourthly, these moral beings strive for perfection in their respective societies. Their actions and behaviours are unique, different and highly commendable. Omolùàbí combines all the virtues of the society together and he displays them accordingly while Junzi knows what is right and he acts in a mollifying manner. Omolùàbí is a person of honour who values hardwork, respects and considers the rights and feelings of others while giving to the community in his deeds and actions. He is a person of moral integrity. Confucius through Junzi encouraged everyone to strive for perfection by pursuing self-cultivation. To him, once we achieve this, the person will be sincere, trustworthy, compassionate, humble and righteous.

Fifth, these virtuous individuals are seen as the guardian of local traditions. Omolùàbí reveals Yorùbá ethical values of respecting ones parents, honesty and
courageousness. Junzi, on the other hand, upholds Chinese tradition of respect for ones parents, tolerating others, working hard and acting with modesty.

Despite these unique similarities between Omolúábí and Junzi, there are some core differences among them. Omolúábí was not created by a philosopher to be the ideal for the society; Omolúábí is a person who actually was born to strive for perfection by himself. Junzi, on the other hand, was postulated by Confucius, who is an ancient Chinese philosopher. His philosophies centered on human action and conduct, thus Junzi represents the ideal man he created for the society to emulate accordingly. Likewise, Omolúábí has some divine traits and attributes, from his name it was observed that it connotes a godlike child while Junzi connotes a patrician, meaning a ruler’s son. Similarly, the ideas of Omolúábí are found in Yorùbá people’s oral tradition which comes in form of proverbs, myths, folklores, tales and some symbolic legacies while the ideas of Junzi are found in the philosophical thoughts of Confucius as recorded in the Analects.

It is obvious that societies cherish the concept of morality and uphold virtues as the framework that should govern the behaviors and actions of human. Omolúábí or Junzi means the ethical person in different societies but who is endowed with exceptional virtues that ensures social order and harmony.

**Conclusion**

This paper concludes that the virtuous being in Yorùbá and Chinese cultures is one who exhibits practical wisdom; an act rightly, humble and radiates acts of kindness to his fellow human beings. This ideal person is found in the character of Omolúábí or Junzi as exemplified in these societies. Certain virtues are universal because they facilitate moral and soul excellence which when practiced ensures societal harmony and progress. It reveals that virtue across cultures can be universal and humans should strive to attain or achieve them. It discerns that if humans want to succeed, they must have moral excellence that supports their collective wellbeing through their distinct traits of virtues. Virtues, as discussed above, are vital for our wellbeing; traits such as humility, respect, hard work, patience can expedite human happiness, flourishing, success and the betterment of humanity. The fact is that virtue represents an excellent character or trait as entrenched by Omolúábí or Junzi because they act, desire, feel and react in a certain unique way.

This research work has identified humaneness as laid down by Confucius as a key virtue for our society. Ren translated as humaneness displays the notion of universal love for human being. With love one can act rightly and justly, he can guide his character and be mindful of his actions. Love can facilitate an honest being that practices telling the truth despite the odds and the consequences. Love as a virtue can also expedite other traits such as having a good mindset towards
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others and guiding ones thought and speech carefully so as to not offend others or hurt their feelings. Practical wisdom is another core virtue that these virtuous individuals have displayed in their respect societies. Practical wisdom guides one’s action in taking the right decision, tolerate other’s actions and feelings, act with modesty and display a high sense of humility while being faithful in one’s dealing and adhering to the notion of hard work.

Virtue, either as a societal principle or character, is highly needed in the society. A lack of it is displayed by dishonesty, negative talks like idle, harsh and divisive talk, and immoral acts such as stealing and sexual misconduct are traits that can facilitate hatred amongst humankind. Therefore, the essence of virtue as displayed by Omolúàbí or Junzi cannot be overemphasized. Confucius argued on the need for self-cultivation (xiūyǎng “修养”), in Chinese is abbreviated as xiū-xīnyǎng-xìng (“修心养性”), which literally translates to "rectifying one’s mind and nurturing one’s character (with a particular art or philosophy). To nurture one’s character needs discipline and a lot of self-control to develop one’s mind under a set principle or rule as stipulated by the society. With self-cultivation, one tends to control and train his outer and inner self; he adopts intellectual instinct, which is explained as a direct reasoning of knowledge or a perception of reality. Self-cultivation is an essential virtue and value that all humans should adopt accordingly so as to train their innermost mind and spirit to achieve moral discipline.

Moral principles, rules and habits are laid down institutional ideas, which guide and direct our patterns of life. They regulate, order, control, and direct the society towards a virtuous way and manner so as to ensure that harmony exists in our world; they are to be inculcated, learnt and adhered to judiciously. Ifa literary corpus declares Ìwá l’esin (Character is the ultimate religion) and as such it is a way of life, a pursuit or interest followed with great devotion and a particular system of belief. It is a designated system of behaviours, practices, morals, worldviews that relates humanity to ethics. It could also be seen as a ritual, which means a standard set of practices that is generally accepted by the society. The ritual of life is seen from Ifas perspective, Ìwá nikan l’osoro o; Ìwá nikan l’osoro; Orikàni ki’burú l’otú Ìfè; Ìwá nikan l’osoro o (Character is all that is requisite; Character is all that is requisite. There is no destiny to be called unhappy in Ife city; Character is all that is requisite). A virtuous character as discussed by Omolúàbí or Junzi above is what the world needs today. This work concludes that our societies are built on moral standards which are designed around the cultural heritages, history, sociology and philosophy of different societies.
Banwo Adetoro Olaniyi

Notes and References


4. Ibid.


8. Ibid.


15. Ibid.


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Moral Virtues as Depicted in Omolúàbí and Junzi


28. Ibid.


30. Ibid.


37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.


41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.