

'ETHICS OF VALUES' AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN SOCIETY: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: *The ethics of values is a specialized area of meta-ethics that emphasises the concept of good in society. It is often contrasted with the ethics of duty, and it is an area that has been neglected in recent times due to a poor index of awareness and application. This underscores the significance of this work. Values are central to human lives and civilisation. Consequently, the question: "What values should I seek or apply to a situation?" is more relevant than "What is it that is right for me to do?" in contemporary society. The researcher was motivated by these differences and also the need to place the ethics of values in its proper perspective. Therefore, the paper roots its thesis on the works of Hartmann, Perry, and Peschke including the ethical insights from John Paul II. The study approaches the subject from its theories, nature, types, and significance in society. The paper is based on Christian ethics, and it also applies phenomenology to analyse and discuss the subject. The analysis reveals that some persons are more interested in the rationalization of duty than the actual application of ethics and values to society. The latter, unarguably, is germane to fostering societal moral rectitude.*

Key Words: Christian Ethics, Ethics of Values, Ethical Values, Meta-Ethics, Objective and Subjective Values, Society.

Introduction

Christian ethics is the discipline that arrives at 'what ought' and 'what ought not' about human conduct, especially from rationality, faith and experiential standpoints. Also, the discipline considers human action from the perspectives of thoughts or intentions (good or evil) and acts or deeds (right or wrong). It also deals with duty which gives priority to the concepts of 'right' and 'good' though Long reasons otherwise:

To bring the terms 'Christian' and 'ethics' together and treat them as referring to a common subject matter might strike persons of faith or those without it as odd, perhaps even as a contradiction. In all of these, every individual person is encouraged to ask these fundamental questions: what is right for me to do? What is good or value

should I seek? As simple as those questions appear, unfortunately, not everyone finds it easy to either articulate or even answer them correctly or satisfactorily to their consciences. This implies a conceptual and practical problem with the actual quest for values in the (Christian) society.¹

Against this setting, it is appropriate here to state that the ethics of values is that specialized area in meta-ethics that considers the concept and reality of good. It tries also to answer the ethical question: what values should one seek in the overall moral order in society? In other words, the ethics of values makes the distinction between objective and subjective theories of values. The ethics of values is a contentious subject which has led to different approaches/traditions amongst scholars. Some of these changes are based on the problem of the objective and the subjective theories of the concept under survey. Similarly, perceptions abound in the relationships between the ethics of values, the ethics of duty, and the ethical values. These nuances and issues motivated the researcher's interest in the present work and also buoyed the cognate aim of gaining insights and contributing to the body of knowledge, especially the vital actions for making society achieve its moral compass.

Hartmann, Perry, Dwyer, and are some of the writers whose works remain seminal in the overall discussion of the ethics of values. They all agreed on the importance of placing a premium on the practicality of applying values over the rationalization of duty. Here lies one of the objectives of the paper, creating an awareness about the importance of the ethics of values for societal well-being. For this reason, the study interrogates its currency among scholars and members of society. The gap in the proper understanding of the ethics of values has led to the call for a proper understanding of the phenomenon and its application to lived experiences by moral agents, human beings, in their respective societies or communities.

The problem of the acuity of ethics of values by the members of society proves the inadequacy of man or woman to comprehend the whole truth due to rationalization. It is here that John Paul II's reflections on

¹ Emmanuel V. Long, *An Analysis of Religious and Theological Concepts: Christian Perspectives* (Chicago: Miller Publications, 2010), 1.

variables that affect moral choices amongst persons in society become significant to this work. For him, humans as moral agents, are influenced by many factors leading to the quality of their actions: “...the good and the evil of human acts and of the person who performs them; in this sense, it is accessible to all people.”²

It is an ethical obligation for human beings to apply virtues and values to their situations in life. Because of this goal, the study approaches the subject with the explanation of key concepts; the consideration of the ethics of values from its theories, nature, and some illustrations (friendship and truth).

Explanation of Key Concepts

Some explanations in this section are accorded to some of the key concepts in this study, especially concerning their meanings, contents, and contexts.

Ethics of Values

The ethics of values is that specialized area in meta-ethics that deals with the concept and reality of good. It attempts to answer the question: What values should one seek in the overall moral order in society? Furthermore, the ethics of values makes the distinction between objective and subjective theories. It seeks to apply directly cognate values to lived situations in life.

Meta-Ethics

Meta-ethics is a branch of ethics that explores the status, foundations, and scope of moral values, properties, and words. It also focuses on what morality itself is, especially through its different aspects: the ethics of values, the ethics of duty, and the ethical values.

Ethical Values

The ethical values in moral philosophy deal with issues bordering on values or valuation either from ethical or aesthetic components within the realm of axiology as a theory of values.

² John Paul II, *The Splendour of Truth* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2005), no. 29.

Theories of Ethics of Values

The ethics of values has taken different forms in recent scholarship, and this has elicited many interests plus varied traditions. The objective and subjective theories of the ethics of values are some of the representations and/or traditions sponsored by Hartmann³ and Perry⁴. The study presents and discusses these theories in this section of the paper.

Nicolai Hartmann's Objective Theory of Moral Values

Moore⁵ has pointed out Nicolai Hartmann as one of the pioneer theorists of the objective component of the ethics of values. Hartmann's theory shares some similarities with utilitarianism though differentiated by the fact that the envisaged good draws its utility from the "greatest good on the whole and their impartial distribution of the good between different persons"⁶. Despite the influence of utilitarianism, it has been on the decline and the reason is clear: "...it reduced moral value to the status of a merely instrumental value by making the fulfilment of duty only as a means to the attainment of value"⁷. Here, the attention has shifted from utilitarianism to that of the ethics of values as an 'entity-bridging' of gaps in matters of moral good and its relationship to the faith phenomenon.

Hartmann provides an alternative plan which appeals to several scholars, including his contemporaries. For him, when a value is intuited by the phenomenological method, it is seen to be wholly independent of existence. It is objective, not in the sense that it is an object in time and space, but rather, in the logic that it is a kernel of the ideal realm of essence⁸. It follows that when it is intuited, its rank in a scale of values is also intuited or even felt along with it. This raises the whole question about the possibility of the proof of rationality of a value above the other values, that is, that one value is higher than the other values. This occurrence, perhaps, branches from the fact that values,

³ N. Hartmann, *Ethics* (New York: The Macmillan, 1932).

⁴ R. B. Perry, *A General Theory of Value* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1944).

⁵ G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge: University Press, 1946).

⁶ G. F. Thomas, *Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1955), 448.

⁷ Thomas, *Christian Ethics*, 449.

⁸ Hartmann, *Ethics*, 1, 183.

often, are ranked according to such constituents as an order of the heart or even a logic of the heart; however, this does not call for taking values to be subjective; in this context, it is a matter of some men/women having greater insights into the phenomena than others whose discernments could be likened to value-blind situation. To this end, a new vista of insight arises as to the reason men/women in society feel impelled to either realize or speculate about values.

Following from the above, Hartmann, understands humanity’s prospects for moral competence, especially from an ethical imperative for what ought and what ought not as an ethical imperative action.⁹ In that case, *what ought to be* denotes an inherent tendency of human persons towards manifesting themselves in the realm of existence. Likewise, he argues that whenever they intuit a value, and/with it, they ultimately intuit what *ought to be*, habitually, they also intuit an obligation to act in a way which brings *ought-to-be* into existence.

Furthermore, Hartmann insists that every value is concerned with morality; that moral life consists of the effort of persons to realize values according to higher values or scale of values. A morally good act always corresponds to a good intention to achieve its objective in the attainment of higher values. This leads to the thought of Perry concerning the subjective theory of values.

R. B. Perry’s Subjective Theory of Moral Values

Given the above, the position of R. B. Perry contrasts that of Hartmann through the latter’s viewpoint.¹⁰ Perry has been adjudged as one of the outstanding advocates for the subjective theory of ethics of values. He defines value as “any object of any interest or attitude which consists in being for some things and against others, in viewing things with favour or disfavour.”¹¹ This perspective implies that an interest is invested in an object, pursuant to its acquisition by the moral subject. It is evident that that interest becomes the constitutive of value and also confers value upon the said object. Thus, Perry defines value as any object of interest; by so holding, he emphasizes that value is not

⁹ Hartmann, *Ethics*, 248.

¹⁰ Perry, *General Theory of Value*.

¹¹ Perry, *General Theory of Value*, 115.

a qualified object of interest, or even, an object of qualified interest, but rather, an object of any interest.

Given the aforementioned, there is no value apart from interests and since there is a diversity of interests among persons, the idea of a scale of values according to which values are ranked either as a higher or a lower value; for example, fairness is a higher value when juxtaposed to the lower value of visiting someone for relaxation. A caveat holds here because this does not imply that Perry is prejudicial to the comparative value system, though for him, values cannot be graded, rather, they are to be compared quantitatively, especially against the backdrop of percentage of interests. A moral act is an act conducive to the attainment of the maximum value and the fulfilment of interests. In the determination of this act, there are three comparative ways: the intensity of interest, the preference of one object over another, and the inclusiveness of different interests. The highest good is the satisfaction or fulfilment of as many interests as there are many interested persons aspiring to a harmonious system of interests. At this point, the interest of each person is met by the objects of preference as well as a possible degree of intensity that is a possible rate of realization. In this light, the application of these principles is preceded by the principle of inclusiveness which deals with the enhancement of value. This implies that all interests that lay claim to the fulfilment of every person's interest should, therefore, become the chief objective of values.¹²

Still, and given the above explanation, Perry insists on the maximum fulfilment of an interest which requires an all-benevolent willingness from each member of society.¹³ In this sense, the harmony of all interests is attainable through a global love, an accommodative love that accepts and supports the interests of other persons. The quality of this collective interest appeals to all persons in society. Once more, one of the merits of his position is its relation to the nature of value and humanity's common good. It does not deal with frivolities or the abstractness of the concept, rather, it is a measurement of usefulness of value as opposed to the objective theory of values.

¹² R. B. Perry, *Puritanism and Democracy* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1944).

¹³ Perry, *General Theory of Value*.

Karl H. Peschke’s Position on Moral Values

For Karl H. Peschke, the ethics of values goes beyond the recognized principle of the categorical imperative by upholding the existence of moral values with factual properties needed for actual practice. These values are thought of as some sort of ideal entity, somewhat like Plato’s ideal forms.¹⁴ In this sense, Peschke makes the following clarifications:

They are not merely subjective conceptions but essences in the ontic realm, though not physically existing entities. In consequence, the moral values are not rationally deduced from any ultimate end of human life. They are rather perceived by a kind of intuition, i.e. (that is), by a certain feeling for value (Max Scheller, Nicolai Hartmann, Wilbur M. Urban).¹⁵

From the above deposition, one can surmise that Peschke recognises the importance of the ethics of values in human society. His views are in corroboration with those of Scheler, Hartman, Perry, Urban, among others. The moral value “is perceived and esteemed by an immediate spiritual appreciation.”¹⁶ In this light, Peschke, argues:

... just as the aesthetic value is loved and realized for its own sake, so also is the moral value to be loved and realized for its own sake. In this regard, insofar as the criterion for the morally good is not a human being’s happiness nor a divinely willed ultimate goal (this by Scheler), but simply the inner beauty of the good, the ethics of values coincides with Kantian ethics. However, as already said, the ethics of values admits of the existence of a variety of concrete moral values, such as justice, courage, self-control, brotherly love, truthfulness, faithfulness, humility. And the axiological ethicists also tend to think that the morally good fulfils or perfects a person in the direction of self-realization.¹⁷

In the Christian ethical perspective and as outlined in the above excerpt, Peschke, makes the difference between the ethics of values and that of axiology. His clarification is germane, especially against the backdrop of some scholars who muddled the two disciplines together.

¹⁴ Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato* (New York: Random House, 1937).

¹⁵ Karl H. Peschke, *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II* (Bangalore: Pauline Publishers, 1996), I: 36-37.

¹⁶ Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, 37.

¹⁷ Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, 37.

To this end, he declares: “Ethics of values attempts to overcome any kind of utilitarian relativism inasmuch as the values are defined as ideal entities which are independent of any further purpose and goal.”¹⁸ At this point, he also refers to what he describes as the empty formalism of Kant which he wants to be replaced and refilled by material ethics. In this case, there is no doubt, that the ethics of values, accords a fairer place to happiness than that of the Kantian ideology. Nevertheless, it has to be observed that happiness does not offer moral value but it is based upon its framework; in this understanding, the experience of a value is by nature connected with a corresponding feeling of happiness, which is quite legitimate.¹⁹ In justification, Hartmann insists that whoever pursues happiness will not find it, but happiness “opens itself to him who sets his gaze ... upon the primary values.”²⁰

Aware of the above argument, Peschke also observes that ethics of values is unable to offer a final solution to the moral question, rather, it analyses the discernment of moral values to an irrational feeling. Thus, everybody has an obligation to make a decision regarding their choices for moral value particularly the basis for those choices or decisions. According to him, “This lack of a superior, objective criterion for the morally good creates a void, which will easily be filled by the criteria of eudaemonism and utilitarianism.”²¹ Consequently, the gap in the criterion for the determination of the morally good would always be based upon the satisfaction derivable from the best norm for human action. It is significant to underscore the precedence of the ethics of values over axiological and aesthetic ethics in matters of the practical application of values to society. This leads to the next discourse, namely, the nature of values.

The Nature of Values

The nature of values draws its lucidity from the earlier-discussed theories, namely, the subjective and the objective theories of the ethics of values. There are two elements of truth in the theory of values. The

¹⁸ Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, 37.

¹⁹ Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, 37.

²⁰ Hartman, *Ethics*, 150.

²¹ Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, 38.

first component is the preservation of the common-sense view that when one values something, it is based on the subjective feelings about what is valued, and the extant interest due to its character. If one is convinced that there is no value in an object except that with which one has his/her interest, then, one ceases to value it and would ultimately lead to another value’s interest. This is exactly what happens when compared to the hedonists, the sensualists and the sentimentalists who do not value things or persons but their own pleasures, satisfactions, and feelings.²² Given all these, the result is obvious: introversion and isolation from a normal relation to reality and values, and, secondly, the theory draws attention to the fact that values make claim upon humans and offer them opportunities for their realization in society. In view of this, one is taken aback by the failure of Hartmann to offer an adequate account of the human knowledge that is limited by its abstraction of values in the realm of human relationships.

Garnered from the preceding understandings, especially that of Hartmann’s ethical thought, one learns that the subjective theory of values presents two main elements: firstly, the subjective theory points to the fact that no one knows anything of values which stands in no relation to man or woman. Things and persons are known to someone as valuable only in and through one’s response to them; and, secondly, the subjective theory emphasizes that the aim of moral acts is the realization of values not in/for themselves but as a necessary condition for the fulfilment of persons. Remarkably, the latter highlights the fact that the realization of values serves the interest of persons or individuals in society.²³

Having determined the above aspects of the phenomenon, there are still some other elements within the purview of the ethics of values in illustrating how elements of truth could be harmonized with one another in a general theory of value. At this stage, the underlined principle is that value is a unique property which is present in the relationship between a subject and an object. It suggests that the object ought to possess a characteristic to be valued and at the same time to hold the same subject in a scale of the analysis of values. These

²² Thomas, *Christian Ethics*, 458.

²³ Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato*.

understandings lead to two aspects: an absolute value or a relative value, and a higher value or a lower value.²⁴

Truth and Friendship: Select Significance of the Ethics of Values in Society

Given the general presentations as earlier deposited, the study in this section presents and discusses truth and friendship as illustrations of the ethics of values. Truth (*veritas*) is one of the values in Christian ethics. It is not easy to find a definition of truth that will satisfy everyone. However, truth may be defined in terms of conformity with a real or actual situation. This characterisation offers a space for other views from ancillary disciplines, especially in the humanities. Truth is understood to be a correspondence between cogitation propositions and empirical demonstration. Another source affirms, “God is the source of all truth.”²⁵ A common denominator remains apparent: that the value of truth lies not in the mere fact of this conformity, but rather in its capacity to bring human beings into relation with reality. This solves the problem of appearance and reality, or the phenomenon of knowledge that is entangled by hearsay other than the reality of the real thing. John Paul II insists that the relationship between faith and other human knowledge ought to be understood in the former providing the transcendental resources needed for reaching ultimate truth.²⁶

Already, there is a problem with those who want to identify truth with the sum-total of truths about different parts or aspects of reality. Critically, this view only succeeds in drawing attention to the truth as facts – giving information about many things or realities. The individuality of a person would be a defect if it merely separates one from others or confines one to himself/herself. Truth offers a person an opportunity to open himself/herself to the universal reality of which he/she is only a small part of it. It is instructive that the reality of truth creates an awareness about the one-sidedness of the experience of each person, and an openness to truth. In turn, truth broadens one’s horizons and

²⁴ Emmanuel Kant, *Theory of Ethics*, trans. T. K. Abbot (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1909).

²⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Kenya: Paulines, 1995), 2465.

²⁶ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (Kenya: Paulines, 1998).

links him/her to the pool of manifestation of truths within one’s neighbourhood or community.

Another realm stems from the question: Is the goal of truth a participation in the whole of reality? Supposing this to be a true situation, it is obvious that all of man’s faculties must be enlisted in the quest for it. One of the fallacies of modern thought is that truth is discovered only through material perceptions. This may be an inadequate account of the process of attainment of knowledge. Properly considered, intuition, imagination, feeling, and action are also involved in the discovery of truth. Owing to this, Whitehead²⁷ avers that even the knowledge of nature requires not only the description of causal relations by the intuition of the poet; the truth about the human person, can be known only by one who does not look at man/woman from the outside as a spectator, but sympathetically listens to him/her and identifies himself/herself with him/her in all joys and sorrows. Moral truth holds meaning only for those who have developed good character. The religious truth comes to only those who seek God. Concerning this, John Paul II, teaches: “Revelation is a point of reference, both for philosophy and theology. It stirs the human mind to ceaseless effort, extending the range of knowledge, and yet admitting with Saint Anselm that God is greater than ‘that all can be conceived’.”²⁸ Hence, a rational analysis and a synthesis must be supplemented by intuition, imagination, feeling, and commitment elicited from the logic of the revealed truth.

Also, Christian ethics holds that the quest for truth, ultimately, proceeds from a religious perspective, that is, the revealed truth. The knowledge of natural laws by scientists, the appreciation of qualities and values by artists, and the synoptic vision of reality as a whole by philosophers are all limited expressions of the truth. Approached from the prism of St. Augustine,²⁹ all truths must be seen in the light of the universal truth which is the wisdom of God. Substantiating this argument, John Paul II, insists, “Faith allows reason to know correctly what it seeks to understand. Human beings reach the deeper meaning of everything, especially of their own existence, by reason enlightened by faith. ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge’

²⁷ A. N. Whitehead, *Science and Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 5.

²⁸ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 14.

²⁹ St. Augustine, *The City of God* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2010), 9.

(Prov. 1:7).”³⁰ This brings about the question of how this divine truth should be known in society. In contrast, this takes one to the worldview of the Greeks, where they assumed that one knows the truth by the use of reason since it is an impersonal phenomenon that is related to the structure of the universe. It cannot stand as far as the Christian pedagogy is concerned; no one knows truth only through philosophical speculation, but also through the lens of moral truth. Knowledge is also acquired through revelation, especially through Jesus Christ. This opinion is further affirmed, “The word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). This is adjudged as the fullest and clearest expression of God’s nature and of his purpose for man which has come through his incarnation in Christ. The words of Christ in the Gospel reflect the faith of the early Church in him: “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

Given the above statements, often, some scholars, especially those in the field of sciences, accuse their counterparts of a mere elucidation of subjects without any empirical evidence. However, the latter opinion is fallacious both in context and content; the association of the value of truth and that of Jesus Christ is a stupendous claim. It originated through revelation and is accepted by faith. But there is nothing inherently irrational in it. The fact that it seems irrational to common sense is not hard to explain. Common sense judges everything in the light of man’s experience of ordinary things and events. It is bound, therefore, to be suspicious of that which is unique. The scientist’s reason explains every occurrence as but an instance of a class of phenomenon which can be described by a law applicable to all instances of the class alike. Obviously, it can do nothing with an event which is unique and falls into no class. John Paul II differs from this reason and goes ahead to declare:

Revelation and philosophy together lead to truth in its fullness. God guarantees the unity of this truth, as revealed in the natural order of things and in the way, God is revealed as the Father of Jesus Christ. ‘Truth is in Jesus’ (cf. Eph 4:2:1; Col 1:15-20). Christ is the *eternal*

³⁰ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 20.

Word in which all things were created and the *incarnate* Word revealing the Father (cf. Jn 1:14, 18).³¹

Garnered from the foregoing, we argue in favour of the interdisciplinary significance of the value of truth, which is squarely predicated on the fact that the Christian religion recognizes that humans, as rational beings, must interpret phenomena using universal concepts that delineate their structural patterns. Nonetheless, the same logic of interpretation, makes a differentiation between the meaning and purpose of realities as distinguished from their general structures and by referring them to their pristine roots – God, who is not a universal but a concrete living being.

There is a strong argument from the Christian ethical perspective that the ultimate truth about reality is revealed, and it also adds value to strands of truths, expressly from the discipline of the science of philosophy and physical sciences. The germ of this deposition, no doubt, rests on the proof that this religious standpoint enhances the value of every kind of truth whereas its loss leads to degradation of reason. The absence of the application of the enlightenment of revelation accounts for different challenges emanating from knowledge and humanity.

The value of truth cannot be divorced from other values in society; this calls for an interpretation of values if there were to be unity in a person’s life, work, spirituality, or leisure. The autonomy of truth or truth-for-truth’s sake has gained some grounds amongst ethicists who argue that truth should not be determined by an appeal to authority or as an affirmation of its intrinsic character. However, it is noteworthy that the value of truth is neither self-sufficient nor independent of other values, and this is because truth enables the self to transcend itself by participating in reality and value beyond itself, it exists not merely for its own sake but for the enlargement of life.

Furthermore, Christians and non-Christians should reject all forms of intellectualism that overlook the dependency of reason upon one’s own will. At this instance, it is obvious: “The human being might be defined as the one who seeks the truth. Life cannot be grounded upon doubt, uncertainty, or deceit. I would constantly be threatened by fear

³¹ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 34.

and anxiety.”³² Consequently, intellectualism is an abuse of the truth that is deployed to manipulate the human situation for selfish purposes. John Paul II counters this problem by stating that the kinds of truth: experiential truth, philosophical truth, and religious truth all lead to holistic knowledge in furtherance of integral human development.³³ This implies that self-interest or class affiliation not anchored on these kinds of truth will distort one’s understanding of truth and also result in fake human relationships. Even so, there are also other values involved in the study of sciences that remain value-neutral and thus in need of religious truth for objectivity. It is this kind of truth that helps one to gain the necessary insights into authentic lifestyle in society. To this end, when one is truthful, he/she develops the required sensitivity and at the same time remains open to:

...seek a deeper truth that explains the meaning of life – truth that is attained not only by reason, but also by trusting other people who can guarantee its authenticity. To trust oneself and one’s life to another person and the decision to do so are among the most important human acts.³⁴

The merits of the preceding expositions lead to the next discourse, namely, situating the value of truth within the Biblical tradition.

Truth in the Biblical Tradition

The concept of truth in the Biblical tradition is not a schematised phenomenon and has resulted in divergent views competing for space as regards its definition, or as others may inquire, a thought or statement adjudged to “conform to reality or a person’s inner conviction and knowledge”.³⁵ This position is akin to the Greek tradition; the latter places the ethical value of truth on the premise of faithfulness to the economy of salvation. Truth is the faithfulness to the laws of God and the actions of Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word, ‘*emeth*, stands for truth which is also coined from the word, ‘*aman*. The latter is the very source of the Judeo-Christian ‘Amen’ that is chorused during the

³² John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 27.

³³ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 30.

³⁴ John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, no. 33.

³⁵ Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, 354.

liturgical actions in temples/synagogues or in churches around the world. Owing to this, ‘*aman*’ conveys the basic meaning of being firm, reliable, and worthy of confidence. Thus, the meaning of ‘*emeth*’ is closely associated with faithfulness.³⁶ In extrapolation, ‘*emeth*’ is an attribute of God (Yahweh) and it is also an expression of God’s faithfulness to his people. This characteristic appeared in the Biblical references to God and in the following ways: God’s promise is truth owing to his trustworthiness (Ps. 132:11); the truth of God is protection (Ps. 91:4); God is light (Ps. 43:3); God lends assistance in the face of adversaries (Ps. 54:5), etc.

A further survey of ‘*emeth*’ reveals yet other manifestation of God in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and in this context, a few instances beckon: “His words are true” (2 Sam. 7:28); “All his precepts are trustworthy” (Ps. 111:7); “Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth” (Ps. 86:11), among others. Based on these, it follows that people should follow the word of God as a sign of their loyalty, especially in obedience to his laws (cf. Josh. 24:14); and walking in the truth and doing the moral truth signify a life of faithfulness to God’s laws (cf. 2 Kings 20:3). ‘*Emeth*’, seen from Gen. 24: 49; 47: 29, portrays a relationship of faithfulness between men/women pertaining “to deal loyally and truly” with a person.³⁷ The same Old Testament highlights the relationships between truthfulness and judgments, that is, a man/woman ought to judge in truth and to render true judgment, that is, equating truth with equity or justice (cf. Prov. 29:14; Ezek. 18:8; Isa. 59:14). Most often, judgment is formed by thoughts and deeds which are seen to have proceeded from the quality of speech; in this case, the truth becomes a correspondence to what is being proclaimed. Everyone is advised to speak the truth: “Speak the truth to one another” (Zech. 8:16); and “Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue is for the moment” (Prov. 12:19).

There is a close relationship between the NT and the OT with special reference to the concept of truth. The word, *aletheia* is the notation of truth in its treatise and is also employed by the writers of the NT. Truth means fidelity to God (Rom. 3:3-7); faithfulness to his covenant (Rom. 15:8); the truthfulness of the word of God (2 Cor. 4:2); believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ is also considered as being truthful

³⁶ Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, 353.

³⁷ Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, 354.

by Paul (Gal. 2:5, 14), etc. The writings of John indicate that truth is an important concept in his ethical thoughts. He sets out to state its significance in the mission of Jesus Christ with the following assertions: “The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17); he is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6); he is “the true light” (John 1:9); he is “the light of life” (John 8:12), among other values attributed to Jesus Christ. In this logic and according to Peschke:

The divine gift of truth imposes an obligation to accept the truth and to live in accord with it. Christians must do away with ‘the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil’ and replace it by ‘the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth’ (1 Cor 5:8). They must put on the new man and achieve the holiness demanded by truth (Eph 4:20-24). Truth is opposed to wickedness (Rom 1:18; 2: 8), just as the light is opposed to the darkness (Eph 5:8f). Love does not rejoice in what is evil, but in the truth (1 Cor 13:6). Therefore, a Christian must not ‘wander from the truth’ (Jas 5:19). He is sanctified by ‘obedience to the truth’ (1 Pet 1:22).³⁸

The above citation approves of the ethics of values as the fulcrum of societal wellbeing, especially as espoused by the relationships between the predicates of Jesus Christ and his followers in real application to real situations. The New Testament ties truth with a ‘yes’ as an affirmation of the correspondence between what is thought about and its practical manifestation in real situations.

Truth in the Service of Societal Wellbeing

The significance of ethics resonates with anybody whose life is adjudged compliant with values. Thus, a person of the ethics of value is someone who is seen to be living an ethical life through the application of values. In corroboration, truthfulness is another ethical value. It is a disposition by which one is as open as possible to the truth, the readiness to follow a good action, and also the commitment to sharing a virtuous conviction with one’s neighbours in society.

³⁸ Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, 355.

Another consideration of the duty of truth is from the point of receptivity on the part of persons in society. It is a person’s submission to/and the readiness to defend the cause of truth in an altruistic way. Truth remains a value to be applied to real situations; in other words, truthful persons could face the consequences of their actions. Thus, being truthful is an attraction to the ultimate declaration of the intents and a witness to what is sincere for the sake of God. Again, we agree that the foundation of truthfulness nurtures the very development of humanity as it concerns intra or inter-human relationships. It is a fact that without the ethics of values as manifested in truth, trust suffers in the architecture of humans as social, religious, ethical, cultural, and symbolic beings.

Approached from the point of cogitation, a person ought to be truthful in his/her relationship. The quest for truth is proof that humans are rational and spiritual beings. The significance of truth demonstrates itself in diverse ways, especially when one seeks the truth for its own sake. Additionally, the duty of truth is a self-worth endeavour in furtherance of the value system in one’s own locality or other climes. In this regard,

All men should be at once impelled by nature and also bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth, once it is known, and to order their whole lives in accord with the demands of truth.³⁹

The merit of this position reflects the core of the value of ethics itself, that is, one’s courage to promote truth for one’s sake and those of others. An honest person is at peace with himself/herself; this course of action diminishes any trace of self-deception which leads to falsehood (cf. John 8:44). For this to happen, a person should assent to self-acceptance and the acknowledgement of one’s limitations. This is manifested in the struggle between the inclination to assume a false status and the representation of a true situation concerning people trapped in this type of life. The solution to this problem is the “...readiness for conversion whenever a person finds himself at fault. Interior truthfulness presupposes humble self-denial free from pride.”⁴⁰

³⁹ “Dignitatis Humanae”, *The Document of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbot, (ed.), trans. Joseph Gallagher (New York: Corpus Books, 1966), no. 2.

⁴⁰ Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, 357.

Human conduct is an exclusive characteristic of human beings, and it contradistinguishes them from other lower animals. A person's action must be true which means that what one does (action) should also correspond to his/her thoughts. Any negation of this position results in opposition to the substantive worth of the person. At this juncture, a mention is made of hypocrisy which simulates a 'virtue' for some momentary gains. This is against truth and according to Rahner,

Care must also be taken to encourage truthfulness and courage in avowing the faith in the communal life within the Church herself, in other words among Catholic Christians. Let us allow opinions to be expressed even when we ourselves find them disquieting. Let us really allow 'public opinion' to have a place in the Church herself, where we are in a position to expand or to restrict the opportunities for expressing such opinions.⁴¹

A major elicitation from the above quotation is that Christians and non-Christians should be loyal to their faith through a constant interrogation that supports ethical thinking aimed at the enthronement of the value of their faith. Thus, every truthful situation proceeds from the right to freedom of conscience, especially the "right not to be compelled to act against one's own conscience and the right not to be restrained from acting according to a person's conscience."⁴²

Friendship: An Ethical Value in Society

Friendship is an illustration of the ethics of values. This concept is seen as a mutual commitment to loving affection, intimacy, trust and confidentiality between two people. Unlike in ancient Greece, where the term mattered most in its conceptual and empirical perspectives, today, it is no longer a major factor in the affairs of men and women – most probably as a result of the abuse of social media. The access to the means of social communication amongst people of this age has reduced the quest for true friendship.

Viewed from the young people's stance, friendship leads to comradeship based on mutual affection. One cannot but marvel at the

⁴¹ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, III (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 251.

⁴² Chiedu A. Onyiloha, "Freedom of Conscience and Its Limitations: A Christian Perspective," *Asian Horizons: Dharmaram Journal of Theology* 10, no. 4 (2016): 787.

potentialities of life which are rapidly unfolding and are also activating societal growth. Owing to the ethics of values, young people turn to their friends for a sense of security as well as for mutual affection. In juxtaposition and elicited from the annals of the Middle Ages, friendship was based on shared interests and tasks:

Our friends are likely to be our fellow-workers, our partners or colleagues. For this reason, the friendships of Middle Ages are normally less ardent and more personal than those of adolescence or early manhood. Spontaneous affection plays a smaller part in attracting one to a friend than his moral qualities, his ability, or his congeniality.⁴³

It is encouraging to note that the value of friendship holds more basis on the part of fully matured persons who are closely united by mutual interests and who devote their attention to the common good. The ethics of values, in this sense, makes a distinction between “pleasure, utility, and virtue; from Christian ethical position, *agape*, *eros*, and *philia* remain the bases of the phenomenon of friendship.”⁴⁴ It is now evident that young people are motivated in their attraction to one another through friendship. On the contrary, adults count on their accumulated values in their choices/selections of friends.

The understanding of friendship as serving societal well-being is understood from the perspectives of *agape* and *philia*. In their traditional nuances, *agape* is the most highly projected form of love, charity and the love God had for man and the love man had for God.⁴⁵ One aspect of this relationship is marked by endurance as opposed to disposition; a person may be friendly to many persons without actually being a ‘friend’ in the true sense of the word. This is antithetical to the true meaning of friendship. It follows that the right attitude to friendship is the readiness on the part of friends to cause solidarity and a sense of belongingness amongst friends. This qualifies someone to be a good friend. It is this authentic feeling that brings about genuine affection among friends. Thus affirmed, a good friend is always an

⁴³ Thomas, *Christian Ethics*, 23.

⁴⁴ Lawrence Monisha, “Impact of Ethical Value on Friendship,” *International Journal of Scientific Research in Multidisciplinary Studies* 4, no. 11 (2018): 30.

⁴⁵ Monisha, “Impact of Ethical Value,” 31.

ethical person whose action is seen to be in sync with ethics and values.

In cognisance of the above, the crux of friendship as elicited from the ethics of values indicates that friendship is not dependent upon material goods, rather, a good friend cherishes the exchange of virtuous resources. In this respect, one contrasts it to the conditions expected of the Christian friendship. Most Christian ethicists like Thomas,⁴⁶ Peschke⁴⁷, and John Paul II⁴⁸ agreed that friendship is an essential part of human solidarity. Every friend relies on other friends' acts of acts of reciprocity for an individual or common welfare. The love for others is also dependent upon others in a mutual fashion. What one learns from this insight is that it is an indispensable factor in 'the architecture' relationships.

Friendship is a reflection of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ who says:

I will no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my father I have made known to you (John 15: 15).

Friendship is a value, and it leads to an ensemble of human desire that is meant to work together besides the family relationship which is based on sanguinity. Every friend becomes an icon of the universality of humanity in an atmosphere of openness to fraternal love, solidarity, and beneficence. This aspect of friendship locates its rationale on a good conscience; there must be no human action that evades conscience as its grand norm. In the consideration of freedom of conscience, two issues come to the fore, namely, the right not to be compelled to act against one's own conscience and the right not to be restrained from acting according to a person's conscience.⁴⁹

Meaningfully, for friendship to attain its objective, it is expected that friends should base their relationships on good conscience, altruism,

⁴⁶ Thomas, *Christian Ethics*, 483.

⁴⁷ Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, 342.

⁴⁸ John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1995).

⁴⁹ Onyiloha, "Freedom of Conscience," 771.

and other properties in consonance with the Christian faith and morals.

Evaluation and Conclusion

From the outset, this study argued that the ethics of values belongs to the speciality of meta-ethics and its main concern has to do with the applicable content of theories, especially as expounded by Hartmann, Perry, Peschke and other Christian writers like John Paul II. It opened a space for an interrogation of the objective and the subjective facets of human judgments in the overall elucidations of human conduct. This study derived its theme from Christian ethics and went further on to x-ray the nature, the types and the significance of ethics of values in society. The ethics of values is an important aspect of intra and inter-human relationships in society though without prejudice to debates concerning its objective and subjective elements. The study affirmed the ethics of values as a specialized area of meta-ethics that deals with the concept and the reality of good. It is concerned with the practical application of values to situations in life as opposed to the ethics of duty that is weighed down by endless rationalization of duty. This distinction was considered the significance of this paper. This supports the welding of societal inclusiveness, especially in social cohesion and moral compass.

Every society depends on the truthfulness of words and actions for the sustenance of mutual trust and peaceful co-existence. Solidarity, love, affection, and togetherness form the basis for authentic relationships whether for family members or amongst friends. The extent to which the members of the society arrived at a cohesive system is a pointer to the level of shared values elicited from truthfulness and friendship. This evaluation was drawn from different authorities, especially the Old and the New Testaments of the Bible, and other Christian writers. In all of these, truth and friendship, remain the classical exemplifications of the ethics of values.

Besides the different variables enabling the ethics of values, the present study pointed to conscience as its irreplaceable basis for application to society. It follows, therefore, that the position of this research remains unchanged: that the ethics of values is the substratum to all human acts, and it continues to hold so as long as humans are rational, moral, religious, social, and symbolic beings. In conclusion, this study

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affirms that the ethics of values is the cornerstone of human civilization and its significance in society abounds.

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