

A Christian Response to Insecurity and Intractable Conflicts in Nigeria: A Challenge to The Youth

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Abstract

This article revolves round two crucial questions about Nigerian youth. First, why are Nigerian youth easy instruments for perpetrating mass violence? Second, how can the same Nigerian youth become agents of transformation rather than destruction? This contribution formulates a response to these questions in four major movements. First, it examines the problem with Nigeria, and focuses especially on the role of emotions in intractable conflicts. Second, it presents an ethical imperative for some problematic responses in the face of increasingly rapid insecurity due to the proliferation of toxic emotions. Third, it reflects on Thomas Aquinas' ethics of vengeance and the obligation of mercy even to enemies. Finally, the article considers proposals that can secure Nigeria's future and build trust in a land full of mistrust and uncooperativeness.

1. Introduction

The principal questions provoking this contribution are: firstly, how did Nigeria and Nigerians sink to the present-day level of pathological violence and intractable conflicts?; secondly, why are Nigerian youth soft targets as instruments to perpetrate violence?; and thirdly, how can Nigerian youth become agents of transformation rather than destruction? Millions of Nigerians are grappling with these questions today.

Indeed, there is a theology inspired by the biblical tradition behind these questions. This theology can be formulated thus: The blood of the innocent spilled across the country is crying out, demanding responses from ethically responsible persons. These responses might

even include “the response of retaliatory violence” (McKeever, December 2006:436). Perhaps the promotion of human rights discourse especially in the face of violence that we have been experiencing in Nigeria for decades is “the best available option for Christianity including ecclesiastical authorities at this time” (p.440). Nevertheless, it appears that lots of Christians in Nigeria have reservations about moving along this trajectory. Not a few Christians today hold that, in the face of *Boko Haram's* unrelenting religious terrorism and the government's inconsistent responses, armed resistance or violent self-defence anchored on an ethics of vengeance should be considered as part of the practical responses. Perhaps they agree with the position that the promotion of human rights discourse as “a response to violence may be too little” (p. 447).

This article responds to the promises, ambiguities and opportunities embedded in the questions and thesis above, having in mind the following aims: i] To have a deeper understanding of the ethical responsibility to preserve life; ii] To highlight the role of emotions in the problem with Nigeria; and iii] To demonstrate how young people can be pivotal for social reconstruction (nation building), such that our country might move from 'nation-space' to 'nation-hood'. I shall proceed thus: First, we shall remind ourselves of the problem with Nigeria. Second, we shall consider the role of emotions in widespread insecurity and intractable conflicts in Nigeria. Third, as a Christian ethicist, I shall attempt to broaden our horizon for a more secure future by reflecting on the necessity of a 'pro-life' security inspired by Thomas Aquinas' contributions on the ethics of vengeance and the obligation of mercy even to enemies. Finally, the article shall consider proposals that can secure our future and build trust in a land full of mistrust and uncooperativeness.

2. Clarification of Terms

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify some key words and terms in this article so that the reader will not be left wondering what these mean. This is important because some of these words and terms are so commonly used that one presumes their meaning, or one presumes they mean the same to everybody at the same time and everywhere.

2.1 Insecurity

This refers to a condition of danger that gives rise to lack of confidence,

protection and safety. This condition, according to Weldes, Laffey, Gusterson, & Duvall (1999), threatens human life, communities, and sometimes even the state through relentless aggression (pp. 10, 19). In the context of this article, conditions of dangers are as a result of public harm arising from either sheer criminality or hate crimes. In Nigeria, the line dividing these is blurred given the atrocities of militias like MEND, Boko Haram, and even the armed forces. Public harm arises from “collective influences of many crimes”. Unpleasant outcomes of public harms include “increased fear, distrust of the justice system and other state authorities, fragmentation of the community and the consumption of resources needed for other priorities” (Johnstone & Van Ness, 2007: 634).

2.2 Intractable Conflicts

These are prolonged violent struggles by communal groups on account of security, recognition, economic participation rooted in primordial clashes (Gawerc, October 2006:435-438). These deep rooted conflicts are 'stubborn' because they appear to “elude resolution, even when the best available techniques are applied” (Burgess & Burgess, November 2003). Conflicts are intractable because of parties' narratives of 'incompatibility' and 'indivisibility'. Incompatibility implies that issues arising from a radically construed identity cannot be compromised to the extent of being made to coexist with other radically constructed identities. This is one of the reasons for the noise of 'secession', '*Sharia*'h', 'confederation', or radically decentralised federalism where different blocs will preserve their identities and pursue single-mindedly the issues at stake. Indivisibility, on the other hand, implies that issues at stake are seen as one package which cannot be broken down into smaller pieces as necessary in negotiated peace settlements (Svensson, December 2007:930-936). Incompatibility and indivisibility based on rigidly constructed identities, along ethnic lines, and worse still along religious lines, as in Nigeria, make parties feel trapped because any agreement requires giving up some crucial values. With this mindset and praxis, there is little hope for the kind of justice, peace, and reconciliation that advocates of conflict transformation and sustainable peacebuilding envision.

2.3 Pathological Violence

Rather than being understood medically as violent abnormality, pathological violence as used in this article means harmful and destructive human behaviour that has increased and is increasing

rapidly (Taylor, 1993:91). This is explained further below when discussing van der Ven *et al.*'s typology of violence (December 2006).

2.4 Toxic emotions

Emotions are socially constructed embodied thoughts and habitual responses that are characterised by apprehension of personal involvement. Hence, emotions are not embodied physiological sensations (feelings). Beyond being socially constructed, emotions are intentional, active engagements regarding how the world is and how it should be (Jaggar, 2009:53-55). Informed by this constructivist and culturalist understanding of emotions, *toxic emotions* are some particular habitual responses that disrupt or poison defined relationships. These emotions are learnt due to their constructed and contextualised nature. Hence, they are difficult to unlearn even in the face of proven facts that these emotions are unwarranted (p. 63). Accordingly, the persistence of toxic emotions demands a critical scrutiny in order to identify the objects of these emotions, and the values desired (Aina, 2010: 18-25).

3. The Problem With Nigeria: Absence Of Justice To Eiye Kinkin

“To keep Nigeria one / Justice must be done” (Soyinka, 2007:142).

But in Its absence...

“The old is dying and the new cannot be born;
in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms”
(Achebe, 2000:80).

This section begins with a mythical story. It is the story of '*Oba Aláràn-án àti Eiye Kínkín*' – 'King *Aláràn-án* and the Tiny Bird' (Adeleke, 2004:183-184). *Oba Aláràn-án* had a community project. He wanted a portion of the village's forest to be cleared and prepared for the village's market. He summoned all in the village, except *Eiye Kínkín*, to participate in this community project. *Eiye Kínkín* was angry and felt insulted by this exclusion. Hence, it devised a means to sabotage the community project as a protest. Consequently, at the end of everyday's work by the villagers, *Eiye Kínkín* would appear from hiding and sing to the grass as follows:

Lead: *Oba Alaran-an bewe* (King *Alaran-an* commissioned a task)

Refrain: *Kinkin* (*Kinkin*)

Lead: *O be kere eye* (He commissioned all birds)

Refrain: *Kinkin* (*Kinkin*)

Lead: *O be kere eye* (He commissioned all birds)

Refrain: *Kinkin (Kinkin)*

Lead: *O d'emi Kinkin si* (He left me *Kinkin* out)

Refrain: *Kinkin (Kinkin)*

Lead: *Koriko dide* (Grass, sprout)

Refrain: *Kinkin (Kinkin)*

Lead: *Eruwa dide* (Savannah grass sprout)

Refrain: *Kinkin (Kinkin)*

After singing, the grass would sprout. This went on for such a long time that *Oba Aláràn-án* got worried. So, he decided to enquire from the *Babaláwo*. After divination, the *Babaláwo* revealed to King *Aláràn-án* that it was the handiwork of *Eiye Kíńkíń* to punish the King for the non-recognition of *Kíńkíń*. Recognition must not just be proclaimed or nodded. It must be profoundly rooted in the corporeal. Hence, to stem the disaster of reversal on their community's project, *Oba Aláràn-án* must apologise to *Kíńkíń* and be made to feel belonged by including *Kíńkíń* in the community project. He did this, and there was peace and progress in the community, and the project was achieved.

This story is used in Yorùbá traditional conflict resolution to upbraid those who ignore the insignificant in the search for peace and stability. The story offers an insight on some observations which I make below on the persistence of violence and mass atrocities in Nigeria. Let us consider the reasons for the pervading violence and insecurity in our land.

4. Insecurity in Nigeria: Olusegun Obasanjo's Submission

When we speak of insecurity and violence, we need to consider the typology of violence around us. There are about five types of violence in the modern state (van der Ven, et al., 2006:268-269):

1. "Institutional or repressive violence" – the state-oriented type of violence to restrain or curtail opposition through the military and paramilitary forces;
2. "Structural violence" – the central type of violence in economic and political marginalisation;
3. "Revolutionary/ideological violence" – the counter violence to overcome structural violations;
4. "Pathological violence" – the response to previous violence

directed to others in form of reprisal so that those others can feel what they had previously gone through;

5. "Criminal violence" – individual crimes committed by persons for some gains or ends.

This typology offers us the possibility of making sense of various instances of insecurity in the country. Widespread insecurity as in Nigeria can be informed by one or a combination of the types of violence just stated. Let's revisit a submission made by former president Olusegun Obasanjo sometime in 2012. *The Guardian* of Tuesday May 8, 2012 quotes the former President on the factors responsible for widespread insecurity in Nigeria, exemplified in the resurgent militancy of Boko Haram: "Studies have shown that a number of factors are responsible for violent conflicts in Nigeria. These include poverty, unemployment, religious intolerance, ethnic rivalry, growing acculturation, resource control, agitations and ignorance" (Abdulsalami & Ebiri, May 8, 2012:1).

We can glean a few insights from Obasanjo's submission:

- i. There is a causal link between uneven distribution of national resources and increasing wave of violence (Adebowale & Ogbu, January 28, 2012). Hence, this is the rationale for ideological, pathological violence, and even criminal violence.
- ii. There is a causal link between violence and the problematic history of recollection and interpretation of the past. This is another ground for ideological violence along ethnic lines.
- iii. Religion is implicated in the violence for ideological reasons. Religious extremists find in their scriptures and traditions a storehouse of justification for the use of force, violence, and perpetuation of human rights abuses (McCormick, 2006:144).
- iv. To stem the rise in ideological violence, the state can be guilty of violence through its disproportionate use of force. This is institutional and repressive violence. The Baga saga in April 2013 is a clear case of how the state can be guilty of repressive violence.

From what former president Obasanjo submitted, the factors for insecurity in Nigeria do not necessarily have to be overcome only

through violence. Even the so-called justified use of force as in armed resistance, violent self-defence and legitimate just war traditionally had a presumption against violence and war (Verstraeten, 2004:100-102). Unfortunately, insecurity and violence have increased today because many actors are guilty of 'idolatry': "Violence happens because nowadays belief in security through weapons has been perverted into idolatry" (van der Ven, et al., 2006:289).

Nevertheless, violent response to insecurity leading to loss of life does not necessarily imply that we are naturally aggressive and violent. I agree with developmental psychologists and relational psychoanalysts that naturally all human beings have an attitude of "empathy and compassion, especially when a fellow human being is in pain or distress" (van der Ven, et al., 2006:265). Stephen Mitchell, in his *Can Love Last?: The Fate of Romance over Time* (2003), tries to understand how an intensely positive phenomenon, "falling in love", can end up in bitter aggression and deep-seated hatred, bordering on self-destruction. He explores the theories of "hawks" (*human beings are naturally wolfish*) and "doves" (*humans are naturally pacific; violence is an external contagion*) (pp. 123-125). Rather than being exclusive of each other, human beings oscillate between the hawkish position (aggression for the sake of power and dominance, as in "institutional and repressive violence") and dovish position (aggression as a response to a sense of "frustration and deprivation") (p. 126).

From his experience as a relational psychoanalyst and marriage counsellor, and from studies in political violence today, Mitchell arrives at a conclusion: "The worst aggression does not just erupt, now here, now there, in a random fashion; it is part of a cyclical pattern of trauma, endangerment, and revenge, leading to more trauma, endangerment, and revenge" (p. 128). Murderous rage usually erupts not as a result of threat to bodily existence, but due to "perceived lack of respect... the threat is not to survival but to dignity and self-respect" (p. 129). Hence, the relentless push for revenge among human beings can be located in the commitment towards redressing past humiliation, even to the point of endangering those taking the revenge (p. 129). The experiences of endangerment (sense of self-respect and dignity being under threat) provoke anger and various responses (p. 130). Ultimately, intense hatred is rooted in "humiliation and endangerment to the self" (p. 143). Mitchell's position finds resonance in a later study on the perceptions of violence among secondary school

students in South Africa.

Van der Ven *et al.* opine that aggression and violence are foreign to human beings' genetic makeup. Violence and aggression erupt largely due to social factors. At the micro level, personal behaviours of some influential people can predispose one to violence and aggression. At the meso level, social institutions give rise to aggression building up, especially in a society where some with a perceived superiority complex live side by side those who are perceived inferior or marginalised. At the macro level, individual institutions that have become part of the structure of the society can influence the incidence of violence and aggression (pp. 266-267).

5. The Role of Emotions in Mass Violence and Insecurity in Nigeria

As stated earlier *toxic emotions* are some particular habitual responses that disrupt or poison defined relationships. The manipulation of ethnicity and religion inspiring mass violence and widespread insecurity is possible or is helped by a human psychology: *the toxicity of humiliation, shame, and worthlessness has a corresponding strong desire for extrication or at least deployment somewhere else.* Even if there are no institutional spaces for removal or displacement, this 'toxic material' will be deployed all the same through other means. Therefore, no matter how punitively strong institutions or legislations are, if these institutions do not create spaces for displacement of toxic emotions, nothing can deter those determined to displace them. It is a healthy and justifiable desire to displace imposed toxic emotions. When the displacement goes awry it is because the state and its institutions failed to acknowledge this desire and respond adequately.

One can glean from the above assertion that the toxicity of humiliation and the desire for its removal or displacement are major contributors to the 'hatred chain'. The more persons or peoples feel 'toxic' and 'worthless' the more they are prone to violently displace their toxicity and worthlessness; they are less interested in inclusionary transformation of their emotions. The higher the level of trauma, the lower the openness to peace-building and reconciliation among divided parties. In the following pages I shall offer two contrasting ways ethical beings, even in Nigeria, deal with 'toxic emotions' fuelling violence and insecurity.

5.1 Toxic Emotions and an Ethical Imperative

Actions inspired by 'toxic emotions' reveal an ethical imperative which can be formulated thus: *“Act in such a way to eliminate toxic emotions or reduce the toxic level.”* This ethical imperative reveals an ethical responsibility that is primarily directed to those with toxic emotions. It does not address the objectivity of this ethical imperative. Left at this level, this ethical imperative becomes a ground for a re-writing of ethics such as that of relativism: there is no room for shared ethics of the human family (an example will be “might is right” ethical logic or the logic of Boko Haram, MEND, and other ethno-religious militia groups). Hence, primary responsibility is to sufferers of 'toxic emotions'; the means by which this toxic level is reduced or displaced are inconsequential. The question rarely arises collectively within the group about the ethics of things in service of the end which is to ameliorate toxic emotions. Dissenters, who insist on discussing this ethics, are hardly tolerated, or even murdered. Consequently, the people are fed on a staple diet of the formulated imperative above.

This is possibly why normal people do abnormal things to neighbours who belong to rival traditions which had caused their 'toxic emotions'. 'Normal people' with 'toxic emotions' imbibe the ethical imperative above to remove this toxic condition from their group – by displacing it on others who caused their condition in the first place. They accept this ethical imperative because, though they are neighbours to these others, living together for decades or generations, they belong to rival traditions (cultural, ethnic or religious). They cannot forget that. The ethical imperative becomes powerfully evocative when those constructing this 'new' ethics invoke any proverb similar to that of the Yorùbá: *“Odò tí ó bá gbàgbé orísun rẹ á gbé”* – “A river that forgets its source will dry up”. So, neighbours must not forget their respective 'sources'. When this 'source' is polluted, people belonging to this polluted 'source' are obliged to do something about this pollution – and it can mean transferring the pollution to their neighbours' 'source', even though unfortunately their neighbours suffer gravely in their hands. This is about memory, honour, and shame.

This ethical reasoning becomes so powerful with time when respectful voices within the suffering group articulate and campaign for this through the triumvirate: politicians, intelligentsia, and the media. This ethical imperative is equally fuelling insecurity and ideological violence in Nigeria. Are we fated to this ethics? One hopes not.

6. Overcoming Toxic Emotions: A Challenge for Nigerian Youth

If we shall move beyond our insecure and violent past, there is the need to highlight habits and actions that can challenge Nigerian youth to have a different spirit from the older generation. One hopes that, as Lágbájá, the Nigerian masked musician, once proclaimed, '*Naija don sweet bifo; Naija go sweet again.*' Nigeria can be authentically pro-life in its ethos and praxis if the youth make a break from the past. Hence, the youth represent a new generation that might, like Caleb, the one who trusted, have a "different spirit" (Num 14:24). Entrance into the Promised Land for Caleb was possible because he had a "different spirit" from his offending and intransigent people. One can deduce from the above that a pro-life future demands being of a 'different spirit' of trust and faithfulness in the other, such that they can enter the Promised Land i.e. the future hoped for and promised.

One place we can begin to challenge the youth towards developing a hopeful 'pro-life' way of life and ethics is the way to handle toxic emotions. So let us return to the ethical imperative regarding toxic emotions articulated earlier, with a proposal that we must live and teach an ethics of vengeance that expresses Aquinas' obligation of mercy to 'neighbours turned enemies'. Managing toxic emotions well means helping youth today "to steer a middle course between the extremes of emotional repression and letting one's emotions run wild" (Cosgrave, February 2009:13). Even in time of grave insecurity like this, we are obliged to be persons of virtue, even with regard to value-sensible emotions. On one hand, we are challenged to allow anger in the belly as did God, the prophets, and Jesus Christ. On the other hand, we must develop – or rather find – ways to train youth to acquire three crucial emotional skills for a truly secure and peaceful future: restraint, delaying one response to impulse, and empathy (p. 14), especially with regard to retaliation. Empathy is the ability to be attuned to the feelings and emotions of others, and so able to read how others are feeling in whatever situation one finds oneself (p. 16).

Insecurity is prevalent in Nigeria because several citizens, rulers and the ruled, adults and young people, lack emotional '*response-ability*'. Hence, we are witnessing normal people doing morally evil things to their neighbours and fellow citizens because they probably have been socialised into relativistic ethics that disregard our universal identity.

Thus, they lack the '*response-ability*' to hear the cry of the Other. In short, they lack emotional intelligence without necessarily being mentally ill. Bill Cosgrave (February 2009:17), an expert on Emotional Intelligence, offers an apt description of the violent offender who lacks emotional intelligence:

(S)he is not lacking in knowledge or intellectual ability. What (s)he does lack, however, is empathy and, as a result, (s)he will be insensitive to the feelings and viewpoints of others. Because of this emotional deficit, such a person can inflict pain or hurt on another without being at all aware of or caring about doing so. (S)he can act cruelly or even brutally in relation to another and yet feel no revulsion or twinge of conscience, since (s)he is emotionally deaf to the impact of his/her actions on the other person or persons.

Empathy and other emotional skills are necessary for the moral living which the violent offender and even the 'revolutionary' lack. Empathy is linked to mercy (*misericordia*, which Aquinas literally translates as 'compassionate heart') towards the misfortune of others: "As Augustine says (*De Civitate Dei* ix, 5), mercy is heartfelt sympathy for another's distress, impelling us to succour him or her if we can. For mercy takes its name *misericordia* from denoting a man's compassionate heart [*miserum cor*] for another's unhappiness" (Aquinas, *IIaIIae*, que. 30, art. 1, *responsio*). Enemies are not excluded from the obligations of mercy and charity (*IIaIIae*, que. 25, art. 8, ad 2). We must love them, not because they are our enemies. We must love them "only in so far as they, like us, are human beings who desire happiness" (*IIaIIae*, que. 25, art. 6, *responsio*).

7. Proposals in View of the Future

Ethics must be incarnated in actions and projects which can unite moral agents across the divide for a peaceful country. This section proposes six possible projects that can help towards a more secure and peaceful nation.

7.1 Toxic Emotions and a Preferred Ethical Imperative

The ethical imperative stated earlier ("*Act in such a way to eliminate toxic emotions or reduce the toxic level*") acknowledges the undesirability of toxic emotions for human wellbeing. Hence, there is the ethical responsibility to 'clean up' the 'toxic material'. This makes sense from

the genius of the scapegoat ritual in the book of Leviticus (Lv. 16:1-10). However, this is ethically problematic if left as it is.

Sensitive to the ethical responsibility demanded by imposed 'toxic emotions', a preferred ethical imperative in dealing with 'toxic emotion' should read thus: *“Act [in such a way] to eliminate toxic emotions or reduce the toxic level such that your action does not generate or transfer such toxicity on your neighbour.”* This echoes the almost universal Golden Rule: *“Do to others as you would want done to you”* – or according to the Yorùbá: *“Oun tí a ò gbodò je, a ò gbodò fi lo elòmíràn”* – *“What we are forbidden to eat must not be suggested to others.”* One can recognise that this ethical prescription echoes Kant's categorical imperative: *'Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.'* However, it goes beyond Kantian imperative which accords priority in ethics to respect for others and not concern with and for others because 'emotion' was banished from ethics.

Consequently, the ethical preference as formulated above provides a possibility for an objective morality that finds its commonality in shared human experience of suffering (Cahill, December 2005: 184-185, 193) which counteracts internally destructive ethical relativism (Pollefeyt, 2000:130) revealed in the actions of Nazis, and ethno-religious extremists in Nigeria. The objective morality suggested in the ethical imperative above demands action – a responsible action that has eyes also on the vulnerability of others. This “ethical movedness” (Burggraeve, 2003:352, 353) especially towards one's neighbours who belong to rival traditions, is a great blessing, providing a possibility for conflict transformation, and a post-conflict Justice with a win-win outcome.

The foregoing should help us recognise afresh the problem with Nigeria and its violent past so that we challenge ourselves to have a scientific understanding of the relationship between insecurity, violence and the human person in the modern state. The complex interplay between the three leaves us with the lesson that our responses have to be robust and nuanced.

7.2 Law Enforcement and Intelligence

According to Patrick McCormick, an American Roman Catholic Moral Theologian, “history shows that violent and punitive reactions tend

not to curtail terror but to undermine civil and political rights and produce more casualties than the original attacks” (March 2006:154). Surely many of us today travelling across Northern Nigeria are gradually seeing our country being turned into a police state or fortress thus adding to our problems. These actions are helping terrorists and their sponsors achieve their aim which is to increase the level of apathy and mistrust of citizens in their government. By so doing, citizens become apathetic towards both institutional/repressive violence, on the one hand, and ideological/revolutionary violence on the other. So, if military's 'shock and awe' approach buys into the logic of cosmic war and theatrical terror, what options are more viable, one may ask.

The Law enforcement model is more viable and promising. This model emphasises intelligence gathering, information and undercover operations. These activities can rein in terrorists and serve as the basis for a long-term peace building model. This model consists of investing heavily in security apparatuses and citizen-collaboration. Assuredly, there might also be the loss of some democratic and civil liberties, with the law enforcement model. However, it should be temporary, publicly debated and as a last resort. This is the model in most European countries, with the exception of the U.K. It appears to be more effective because potential criminals and terrorists are picked up quietly without theatrics which sometimes backfires, and without heating up the polity. Whatever has to be done, both government and citizens must not overreact. This model must also ensure that the oppressed and the violated get peaceful means to seek political redress. If they don't, we should continue to expect the vengeance of '*eiye kinkin*'.

7.3. Mediations of Justice

Security of life and property needs social, juridical, economic, financial, and political institutions, structures, organisations and systems to reach massive third parties in need of goods and services. So there is the need for and commitment to structural and social transformation. Without these we cannot grow into full stature of Christ (Eph. 4:13).

This proposal is pertinent especially in the face of the anger of thousands of '*eiye kinkin*' who have become desperadoes. As Akper (2005) rightly points out, the absence of justice for '*eiye kinkin*' is

responsible for “a breakdown of law and order in Nigeria in the past ten years.” Poverty (lack of economic power) is a serious security challenge (pp. 474-475). As long as we have hordes of desperadoes who feel left behind by their government, they will always be willing tools in those who 'offer them dignity' by empowering them with weapons for criminal or ideological activities. Hence, material conditions have to improve and institutions brutalised have to be repaired. “Restoring dignity” of the desperadoes (our *eiye kinkin*) means creating space for “a legitimate political voice and economic agency” (Fattah & Fierke, March 2009: 87).

Beyond short-term palliative measures, enduring security will happen in Nigeria if we understand the psychology of the violent offender and seek to transform the culture making it possible. James Gilligan (1996), whose area of specialisation is the psychological roots of violent behaviours, offers this insight: “... *all violence is an attempt to achieve justice, or what the violent person perceives as injustice, for himself or for whomever it is on whose behalf he is being violent.... Thus, the attempt to achieve and maintain justice, or to undo or prevent injustice, is the one and only universal cause of violence*” (pp. 11-12, italics in the original). One only needs to hear the warped narratives of various terrorists in Nigeria to appreciate Gilligan. Gilligan's thesis undoubtedly cautions against moralism with regard to ethical evaluation of violent behaviours. Moralism does not pay adequate attention to the multidimensional human person(s) generating violent actions (Aina, June 2012/June 2013: 4).

7.4. Youths, Moral Regeneration and Virtuous Living

It is trite to say conversion to a life of virtue builds up a country whose 'pro-life' credentials might be Christian love inspiring care and respect for the lives of fellow citizens (Akper, 2005: 478). Virtues are “personal qualities or traits of character, shown through habitual actions that make us persons of excellent character... The repetition of virtuous actions causes a person to develop a virtuous character, and once that character is formed it becomes the source of that person's virtuous action” (Banks, 2004: 237).

While we seek answers to 'What must we do?' in the face of insecurity and loss of precious lives and properties, one insists that this quest must be posed and pursued within an ethics of virtue that emphasises moral character. In other words, instead of simply asking 'What must

I/We do?', we should encourage ourselves to ask: 'What kind of person should I/we be?', 'what character traits should I/We acquire?', 'What should be the normal cause of action?' (Banks, 2004:236). An ethics of action – what do we do concretely in the face of incessant religious and ethnic violence, and criminal violence – is in need of an ethics of character (242). There is no illusion that virtue ethics is straightforward. On the contrary, virtue ethics is complicated and shows the complexity of human life. For instance, if courage is a virtue, how courageous are we required to be? Suicide terrorists who blow up cars around the country are acting courageously. But are they? Or are they not?

Ethical persons must be formed to know how they can discern activities that can fail the test of virtue. Truly virtuous actions must promote 'happiness' i.e. well-being or flourishing. Happiness is “a way of doing things that is positivedemonstrating an active engagement with life.” Happiness comes by opting for the golden mean i.e. “the average between two extremes” (Banks, 2004: 249).

7.5 Rebuilding Trust in a Traumatized Nation

While youths' formation in virtue is ongoing, there is the need in the short run to have confidence-building measures meant to replace mistrust with trust, peace and cooperation (Moltmann, 2006:475). Propaganda and ideological mistrust should give way to cooperation. How shall we get there?

Some principal activities that we need in this country for security and tranquillity will involve religious actors who can equally be collaborating with representatives of divided communities. This cooperation should lead to having strategic policy changes along the following lines (Rothstein, 1999:244):

- (a) Agreement to abandon rhetoric for various audiences that keep up inherited mentalities fuelling distrust;
- (b) Dominant groups agree to make short-term sacrifices (either out of altruism or self-interest);
- (c) All the groups, especially the minority and marginal ones, make concerted efforts to rein in their extremists and close in revolutionaries;

- (d) Creating space for apologies for past transgressions against inter-group relationships;
- (e) Engaging creatively with the issue of punishment and redress in a way that helps to reduce animosity and intransigence;
- (f) Creating an economic blueprint that balances efficiency and equity, even with the possibility of sacrificing efficiency in the short term so that expectations are well-managed without dangerous disillusionment in the long run.

7.6. Toxic Emotions, Restoration of Dignity and Non-Violent Resistance

The youth are crucial to the future of peace desired in Nigeria. As digital residents in the modern age, youth must be challenged to use the various media fora to break through the narrative of the lie they grew up with. With Blackberry, Facebook, Twitter, and blogging, young people can do for Nigeria on security challenges and religious violence what they did during the last general strike in January 2012. Through these devices, people from different cultural and religious divides are able to share their stories of suffering and triumph. Thus, we are able to grow in knowledge. Without this, ideologues – of *Boko Haram* – keep exploiting perceived/real sense of humiliation, accentuating powerlessness and loss of autonomy (Fattah & Fierke, 2009: 87).

8. Conclusion

This article has provided reflections of a Roman Catholic ethicist on the different types of violence at play in Nigeria and how these increase insecurity in the land and threaten the sacredness and value of human life. It ascertained that the absence of justice is the primary problem with Nigeria in relation to violence and insecurity. This is intolerable for a truly Christian pro-life ethos, just as it is dangerous for the existence of this country.

The article considered a nuanced response to the possibility of justifiable armed resistance or violent self-defence because of the ethical insight that 'thou shalt not kill' presupposes the unacceptability of indifference. Hence, inaction is ethically irresponsible in the face of injustice against the vulnerable other. Consequently, there might be times and contexts when violent self-defence might be permissible as

the last resort. This is implied in the first problematic ethical imperative about dealing with toxic emotions. This imperative does not stimulate us to become virtuous persons. On the contrary, the preferred ethical imperative on overcoming toxic emotions should inspire us as persons of virtue to explore various little ways that we can contribute to overcoming the culture of violence and climate of fear in Nigeria.

This led us in the final section to reflect on six proposals that might be relevant to this youthful country on how to prepare to enter the future that our parents and elders might not enter. One is hopeful because today's youth are or will be, by God's grace, of a different spirit. These proposals include investing and collaborating in intelligence gathering, offering institutional and structural mediations for our passion for justice, especially to give hope to the desperate and angry 'eiye kinkin' that are willing tools in perpetrating criminal, ideological and revolutionary types of violence. Others are the need to form the youth in virtuous living and moral regeneration; rebuilding trust among traumatised Nigerians, and the possibility of non-violent resistance in promoting the dignity of human life and overcoming toxic emotions.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Wole Soyinka made this statement upon his release from over two years of solitary confinement due to his protest against the Civil war. The epigram above was his "antidote" to a national jingle during the war: "To keep Nigeria one / Is a task that must be done." The "antidote" is premised upon his conviction during his prison days that there must be determination to eradicate "fundamental inequities which gave rise to the initial conflicts" (Soyinka, 1988, 181).

² *Babaláwo* literally means "father of mystery". This implies there is a mystery and the *Babaláwo* is "father" (authority) of the *Ifá* Literary Corpus. The Yoruba regard the *Ifá* corpus as their primary moral code and source of instructions for daily life. So, the *Babaláwo* is one versed in the *Ifá* corpus to the extent he has reached the level where he can discern what *Orunmila* – the God of Wisdom, and the owner of *Ifá* – reveals for those who come seeking discernment (Abimbola, 1975, 32; Oduyoye, 1972, 93-100; Olupona, Fall / Winter 2004 / 2005, 77-78).