

**UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT**

**THE ETHICS OF LIFE: VALUES FOR  
OPTIMAL EXISTENCE**

**A VALEDICTORY LECTURE**

**By**

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## **PROGRAMME**

- 1. GUESTS ARE SEATED**
- 2. INTRODUCTION**
- 3. THE VICE-CHANCELLOR'S OPENING REMARKS**
- 4. CITATION**
- 5. THE VALEDICTORY LECTURE**

The lecturer shall remain standing during the citation. He shall step on the rostrum, and deliver his Valedictory Lecture. After the lecture, he shall step towards the Vice-Chancellor, and deliver a copy of the Valedictory Lecture and return to his seat.

- 6. CLOSING REMARKS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR**
- 7. VOTE OF THANKS**
- 8. DEPARTURE**

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this Lecture to the Almighty God who has showered me with special love since birth and has continued to lead and guide me through life's tortuous paths.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I remember and thank Dr. Ken Katchy, the Acting Head of the combined Pathology Department, who in 1988 informed me that the University of Port Harcourt needed a Chemical Pathologist. I also remember and thank my late mother, Chief (Mrs.) Grace Ada Wakwe who convinced me that it was better to settle down in Port Harcourt instead of Calabar.

I thank members of staff (Academic and Non-Academic) of the Departments of Anatomic Pathology, Chemical Pathology, Haematology & Blood Transfusion and Medical Microbiology who helped me to mature academically while the Division of Pathology was growing in the University and Hospital. In the early and late 90s one could not distinguish who was a Hospital or University staff, everyone tackled whatever assignment that was given with enthusiasm. By the time the Hospital moved to the permanent site, the cracks became obvious. I enjoin the members of the College of Nigerian Pathologists, Port Harcourt Branch, to mend those cracks.

I acknowledge the contributions of the Provosts of the College of Health Sciences and the Chief Medical Directors of the Teaching Hospitals to the growth and progress of my career and the Pathology Division. The Vice-Chancellors, from Professor S. J. S. Cookey to Professor Ndowa E. S. Lale have treated me nicely. Professor Emeritus N. D. Briggs took me as a younger brother.

I have very close friends, within and outside the University. Some of those within have moved out to their private buildings in Port Harcourt or to their home towns. We see sparingly. I thank all of them for their love and goodwill, especially those who are still serving. I have been lucky that University

activities have kept my 'senior brother', Professor Emeritus S. N. Okiwelu in Port Harcourt most of the time. I thank Professor Bayo Afonja and late Professor Tunde Cole Onitiri who taught me the tricks of the trade.

The interest in Medical Ethics was developed at Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Uganda, when I was on Sabbatical leave. The quiet and serene atmosphere of the institution stimulated my subconscious mind. I acknowledge all the students who passed through my Clinical Pathology or Medical Ethics Classes.

I wish to encourage members of the Steering Committee of the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics, University of Port Harcourt Unit and members of the Research Ethics Committee that their work of spreading the Bioethics message is just beginning. There is need for all the departments in the University to teach the Ethics of their disciplines.

Finally, I express my gratitude to my immediate and extended family for their understanding and unflinching support.

## PROTOCOL

1. The Pro-Chancellor and members of Council of the University
2. The Chairman and members of the Governing Board of the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital
3. The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ndowa E. S. Lale
4. Past Vice-Chancellors
5. Deputy Vice-Chancellors
6. Other Principal Officers of the University
7. The Chief Medical Director, University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital (UPTH), Professor Henry A. A. Ugboma
8. The Chairman, Medical Advisory Committee of UPTH
9. Other Principal Officers of UPTH
10. My Lords, Spiritual and Temporal
11. The Provost, College of Health Sciences
12. The Dean, School of Graduate Studies
13. Deans of Faculties
14. Professors and other Academic Colleagues
15. Directors and Heads of Departments
16. Members of Technical and Administrative Departments
17. Unique Uniport Students
18. Invited Guests
19. Members of the Press
20. Ladies and Gentlemen.

## **THE ETHICS OF LIFE: VALUES FOR OPTIMAL EXISTENCE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The word “ethics” makes many people nervous. It has its root in the Greek word ‘ethos’ that means character or a way of life. Ethics is important in life because it addresses itself to the most fundamental question in life, namely, how should a human being act? This question is fundamental to all human activities. Whatever action that led to human fulfilment was regarded as good and that which negated human fulfilment was regarded as bad. Most people now think of ethics (or morals) as rules for distinguishing between right and wrong. Examples are:

- The Golden Rule – “Do unto others as you will have them do unto you”.
- Professional Code (Hippocratic Oath) – Non-maleficence which means, “Above all, do no harm”
- Religious Creed (Ten Commandments) – “Thou shall not kill”

The most common way of defining “ethics” is: Norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviours.

An alternative definition of ethics is as a method, procedure or perspective for deciding how to act and for analyzing complex problems and issues. This applies to ethical standards of different professions. Professions have standards of behavior that suit their particular aims and goals. These standards also help members of the discipline to co-ordinate their actions and activities and to establish public trust in the discipline. For example: Medical ethics, Legal ethics, Academic ethics, Journalistic ethics etc.



There are different types of ethical studies:

- Normative ethics: The study of rules and regulations regarding rightness and wrongness of human actions.
- Descriptive ethics: Where the study of human action centres on description of how human beings behave or act without making value judgements. The study of moral codes of societies and activities.
- Meta-ethics: Where the study centres on definition and clarification of ethical concepts and terms.

## **HISTORY OF ETHICS**

Ancient ethical thinking began with the Greek Sophists of the fifth century BC and ended with the fall of Rome<sup>1</sup>. Medieval ethical philosophy, that of Western Europe was from AD 400 to 1400, approximately, from the fall of Rome to the Renaissance. Pre-modern ethical philosophy began after the Renaissance, 1600 and continued to the UNESCO Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights in 2005. Modern ethics is Bioethics – the ethics of life.

### **Ancient Ethics**

The Sophists were itinerant teachers who travelled around the Hellenic world teaching young men the art of public speaking – the most important skill needed to become successful in the political arena of the day. A few are:

1. Socrates, who held that virtues of self-control, wisdom and courage are nothing other than a particular type of knowledge<sup>2</sup>. The idea, that terms such as courage and self-control pick out a single state of knowledge has become known as the doctrine of unity of virtues. Given the unity of virtues, it follows that a person cannot possess one virtue independent of others.
2. Plato believed that justice is an ordered state of the soul with each part – reason, spirit and appetite – performing its

proper function. The just person is happy because his soul is ordered in a proper way <sup>3</sup>. By contrast, the unjust person's soul is chaotic and at war with itself. Possession of virtue – most specifically, justice – is an independent necessary condition for good life.

3. Aristotle taught that virtues of character and intellect are ways of perfecting reason and hence indispensable to the good human life. Although Aristotle emphasized the importance of cultivating one's rational capacities, he did not neglect the importance of friends, wealth and social status in a good life.
4. Epicurius recommended a policy whereby pleasures were optimized <sup>4</sup>. When we were young (during the Biafra civil war) there was the joke about the "Epicurian policy" which states that you should eat, drink and make merry for tomorrow you shall die. That was not what Epicurius meant. Though he recommended having pleasures, he noted that some pleasures were not worth having because they led to greater pain and some pains were worthwhile when they led to greater pleasure.

The ancient Greek ethics is a form of intellectualism: the intellect was conceived as the most important faculty in the determination of an action. Once the practical intellect had judged a certain course of action to be the best, rational choice would follow.

### **Medieval Ethics**

This was the period of the Priests, called the patristic period.

1. Saint Augustine held that one might know the good and still not do it. He developed a notion of the 'will' as an executive power that need not follow the intellect's judgements <sup>5</sup>. A person can perform an action that he judges to be entirely unjustified.

2. Saint Thomas Aquinas agreed that happiness (eudaimonia) is the highest human good – the good of human existence and that virtue is in some way essential for one achieving this goal. Aquinas transposed happiness into perfect happiness (beatitude), conceived as union with God. For Aquinas then the goal of human life is fully achieved in the beatific vision, identified as supernatural union with God in after life <sup>6</sup>.
3. William of Ockham believed that natural law is ultimately rooted in the will of God. The idea became known as theological voluntarism, a meta-ethical doctrine according to which actions are right in virtue of God willing them <sup>7</sup>.

The beginning of Renaissance (1400) and the Protestant Reformation (1520) brought changes in the intellectual climate of the day. Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) is one of the important figures in the mediation and transformation of the natural law theories of the medieval period into the Enlightenment context. He argued that natural law does not depend on God's existence but on rational human nature, and that it is the function of the political society to protect the natural rights of human beings – rights every person has independently of any contribution he or she makes to the community.

### **Pre-modern Ethics**

Pre-modern ethical philosophy started after the Renaissance.

1. Thomas Hobbes claims that human nature is inherently selfish and that the objective of moral principles without political authority is misconceived <sup>8</sup>. The Earl of Shaftsbury argues that human beings were capable of altruism, since they have desires of their own good (private good) and that of others (public good). Others argue that the basic principles of morality are independent of both God's will and political institutions.

2. The seeds of Utilitarianism lie in the writings of David Hume, who emphasizes the “utility” of virtues. Utilitarianism recognizes the fundamental principle – the principle of utility. The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, the “Greatest Happiness Principle”, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness <sup>9</sup>.
3. Immanuel Kant <sup>10</sup> suggests that happiness achieved through immorality is not a good thing. He states that “good will” is good, not because of what it brings about, but in virtue of its own principle of willing. Kant’s notion of goodwill leads him to the ‘categorical imperative’. Kant’s categorical imperative refers to the “supreme principle of morality” from which our moral duties are derived. When Kant says human beings are ends in themselves, he means that they have dignity and the appropriate response to dignity is respect. The Humanity Formula for the categorical imperative prescribes that we respect persons because they possess dignity.

### **Theories of Applied Ethics**

#### **Analytical Ethical Philosophy**

Emotivism and prescriptivism may be understood as attempts to make sense of evaluative language while adhering to the principles of verification. R. M. Hare argues that evaluations are prescriptions (commands): saying that kindness is good is a way of telling people, that they should be kind. Evaluative judgements are then understood as emotive and prescriptive and are contrasted from descriptive judgements. Descriptive judgements are appraisable as true or false; evaluative judgements are not. In this way, a fact-value distinction is upheld.

### **Existentialist Ethical Philosophy**

The existentialists argue that values are subjective rather than objective, they are ultimately created by free choices. Each person must make a personal choice about morality and try to live an authentic life, by facing his/her responsibility, thereby avoiding bad faith. According to Satre <sup>11</sup>, human beings are responsible for their Character, emotional reactions, and even to some extent the situations they find themselves.

### **Other Theories**

The traditional but deficient view concerning ethical reasoning and decision-making in applied ethics is that one simply “applies” a particular ethical theory such as deontology or utilitarianism in a given context such as business ethics, political ethics or medical ethics in order to solve a moral problem. This top-down approach of ethical reasoning and decision-making adheres to the idea that ethics is quite similar to mathematics, in that it pre-supposes a solid foundation from which principles and general rules can be inferred and then applied to concrete cases independent of details of the particular case. With problems of the twentieth century such as radioactive wastes, genetic engineering and cloning, this top-down approach did not work. The old theories were modified to deal more precisely with the new situations:

- ❖ Christine Korsgaard <sup>12</sup> – modified Kantianism
- ❖ Richard Hare – modified Utilitarianism
- ❖ Beauchamp and Childress <sup>13</sup> – brought up the four principle approach used in medical ethics.
- ❖ Tong R. – introduced the Feminist Ethics and the Ethics of care <sup>14</sup>.
- ❖ Jonsen and Toulmin - revived Casuistry as an inductive method of ethical reasoning and decision-making <sup>15</sup>.

- ❖ Hoursthouse R. – emphasized that right action and the right motive must come together in Virtue Ethics.

In Casuistry and Virtue Ethics the bottom-up approach was re-discovered and refined in order to examine complex ethical issues.

- 1) Depiction of the Case: A thorough depiction of the empirical and moral elements of the given case lays out the basic structure and decisive problems. Vital questions are:
  - a) What are the particulars of the case (who, what, where, when, how much)?
  - b) What are the basic questions in the relevant area? (In medical ethics: what are the medical indications? What are the patient's preferences? Evaluating quality of life, consider and respect context of treatment).
- 2) Classification of the Case: One must now classify the case by finding paradigm cases, important similarities and differences of the specifics of the case.
- 3) Moral Judgement: Once the specific similarities and differences of the case are determined, the Casuists evaluate the results by adhering to common sense morality and the basic values of the community.

Case sensitivity and the partial integration of cultural and community-bound values and expectations are in general advantageous in ethical reasoning and decision-making.

### **ROUTE TO MODERN ETHICS**

The re-awakening of global ethical issues occurred after the "holocaust" during the Second World War. On August 20, 1947, Judges of the United States Court delivered judgement on the trial of twenty three medical doctors who were accused of using humans for experiment. Many of the experiments were carried out at the Auschwitz concentration camp, where

Jewish prisoners were tattooed with numbers that will be used to identify their bodies after death. In a section on their verdict titled, “permissible medical experiments”, the verdict set out ten points on human experimentation, termed, the Nuremberg Code<sup>17</sup>.

1. Voluntary consent is essential.
2. The results of the experiment must be for the greater good of the society.
3. The experiment should be based on previous animal experimentation.
4. The experiment should be conducted to avoid all unnecessary physical and mental suffering and injury.
5. No experiment should be conducted if it is believed to cause death or disability.
6. The risk of the experiment should never exceed the benefits.
7. Proper preparations should be made and adequate facilities provided to protect subjects from injury, disability or death.
8. The experiment should be conducted by scientifically qualified persons.
9. During the course of the experiment, the subject should be at liberty to bring the experiment to an end.
10. The Scientist in charge of the experiment must be prepared to terminate the experiment when injury, disability or death is likely to occur.

On September 17, 1947, less than one month after the verdict was given, the representatives of Medical Associations from 27 countries gathered in Paris and held the first General Assembly at which they founded the World Medical Association (WMA). By 2013, member countries had grown to 102. The WMA hold meetings every year to review developments in the health sector. These meetings lead to new

or modified Codes and Declarations. The Nuremberg Code (1947) may be said to be the modern beginning of Research Ethics. It was later put in a better format as the Helsinki Declaration (1964).

The following events that occurred soon after the issuance of the Nuremberg Code re-awakened global insistence on following ethical values.

- 1) The formation of the World Medical Association (WMA) in 1947
- 2) WMA Geneva Declaration (1948) – The Pledge by Medical Practitioners that modified the Hippocratic Oath of 460 BC.
- 3) United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- 4) WMA International Code of Medical Ethics (1949) – Regulations that governed the practice by Physicians.
- 5) The establishment of the Council for International Organization of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) jointly by the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNESCO (1949). Mission is to advance Public Health Research including Ethics, Medical Products Development and Safety.

Listing the above is to point out that it was actually the holocaust that led to the formation of these world bodies. Some of the medical Codes and Declarations brought out by the WMA after their London meeting in 1949 are shown in Table 1<sup>18</sup>.



**TABLE 1: World Medical Association Codes and Declarations up to 1987**

Year	Codes/Declarations	Reason
1964	Helsinki Declaration guiding Physicians in medical research	Modified the Nuremberg Code and set out guidelines for clinical research.
1968	Sydney Declaration on Death	The declaration accepts determining the point Of death using criteria approved by the State.
1970	Oslo Declaration on Therapeutic abortion	Where the State legislation and the National Medical Association agree, abortion could be performed as a therapeutic measure.
1975	Tokyo Declaration on Arrest and Detention	Forbids Physicians from participating in torture or executions.
1977	Hawaii Declaration on Psychiatric ethics	Guidelines on treatment of psychiatric patients.
1981	Lisbon Declaration on rights of patients	Gives patients the right to choose their Physicians, to accept or refuse treatment.
1983	Venice Declaration revised the International Code of Medical ethics	Revised or affirmed the existing declarations. Issued statements about discrimination in Medicine. On the use of computers, affirmed patient's rights to secrecy.
1987	Declaration on Human Organ Transplantation  And  Declaration on Euthanasia	The statement applies to living and dead patients. The doctors involved in the transplantation should not be involved in patient management or certifying the patient dead.  The practice of euthanasia is unethical. The declaration does not prevent the Physician from respecting the desire of the patient to allow natural process of death to follow its course in the terminal phase of the illness.

In 1994, the Council for International Organization of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) held a meeting in Ixtapa, Mexico. The topic was, "Poverty, Vulnerability, the Value of Human Life and the Emergence of Bioethics". The meeting resolved that principles of Bioethics entail concrete obligations on the part of the international agencies, governments, health care providers, professional associations and society at large, as well as individuals and specific groups<sup>18</sup>. It was also agreed

that ethical norms and values differ significantly from culture to culture, nevertheless, there were fundamental principles that promote human rights and welfare which could be applied across cultures. Bioethics should also protect the most vulnerable in the society.

The origin of Bioethics is usually associated with the publishing of the article, “Bioethics, the Science of Survival” by Van Renssellear Potter, a Biochemist, in 1970, which suggested viewing bioethics as a ‘global movement’ in order to foster concern for the environment and ethics. However, we know that this version is incorrect because Sass<sup>19</sup> informed us that the German Theologian Fritz Jahr published three articles in 1927, 1928 and 1934 using the German term, “Bio-Ethik” (which translates to “Bio-Ethics”) where he forcefully argued for the establishment of a new academic discipline. He also advocated the practice of a new, more civilized, ethical approach to issues concerning human beings and the environment.

Bioethics, literally translated as the “ethics of life”, was widely accepted as a discipline after the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) brought out the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights. The Declaration addresses ethical issues related to medicine, life Sciences and assorted technologies as applied to human beings, taking into account their social, legal and environmental dimensions. Bioethics is the modern ethics. Countries are advised to take all appropriate measures whether legislative or administrative to give effect to the principles set out in the Declaration in accordance with international laws. Nineteenth (19<sup>th</sup>) October had been declared World Bioethics Day because the Declaration was accepted by the General Conference of UNESCO on 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2005. The Chairman and some members of the Steering Committee of the University of Port Harcourt Unit of the UNESCO Chair in

Bioethics, organized Radio programmes to disseminate the Bioethics message to the Populace for the 2018 World Bioethics Day.

While medical ethics uses the four principles derived from the Hippocratic Oath, the UNESCO Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights uses fifteen principles. These are Articles 3 to 17 of the Declaration <sup>20</sup>:

1. Human Dignity and Human Rights
2. Benefit and Harm
3. Autonomy and Individual Responsibility
4. Consent
5. Persons without capacity for consent
6. Respect for human vulnerability and personal integrity
7. Privacy and Confidentiality
8. Equality, Justice and Equity
9. Non-discrimination and non-stigmatization
10. Respect for cultural diversity and pluralism
11. Solidarity and co-operation
12. Social Responsibility and Health
13. Sharing Benefits
14. Protecting future generations
15. Protection of the environment, the biosphere and biodiversity.

Rapid developments in the natural sciences and technology greatly improved better living conditions and raised the standard of living of people world-wide. On the other hand, some undesirable outcomes (nuclear wastes, water and air pollution, desertification etc.) and innovations (genetic engineering technology cloning etc.) have raised fears on the future of mankind. Problems from specific situations, use of gene-manipulated food and production of 'designer' babies have given rise to heated public debates and serious concerns on safety issues. There is need for ethical guidance which is

not satisfied by applying traditional ethical theories. The objectives of disseminating the principles of Bioethics are:

- 1) To guide States in the formulation of their laws in the field of Bioethics.
- 2) To guide the actions of individuals or groups.
- 3) To promote respect for human dignity and human rights.
- 4) To recognize the importance of freedom of scientific research and benefits, while stressing the need for such research to occur within the framework of ethical principles.
- 5) To foster multidisciplinary and pluralistic dialogue.
- 6) To promote equitable access to medical, scientific and technological development.
- 7) To safeguard and promote the interests of the present and future generations.
- 8) To underline the importance of biodiversity and its conservation as a common concern for humankind.

Bioethics is not just an inter-disciplinary field but also multi-disciplinary since Bioethicists come from various disciplines, each with its own distinctive set of assumptions. While this facilitates new and valuable perspectives, it also creates problems for a more integrated approach to Bioethics. Therefore, Physicians will still discuss medical ethics (problems with an index patient), the Researchers (research ethics), the Environmentalists (environmental ethics) and the Workers (work ethics).

### **MEDICAL ETHICS**

In medical ethics, one is concerned with the general ethical question of, “What should one do under the particular circumstances of medicine”. The bottom-up approach of the modified Casuistry and Virtue Ethics described earlier is very suitable. The Codes and Declarations of the WMA have also

been enumerated. The Physician's Pledge, which is called the Declaration of Geneva (1948) is sworn before the Physician starts to practice. It was amended in 1968, 1983, 1994, 2005 and 2006. In all these amendments and modifications, the issues were arguments concerned with the beginning and end of life. Abortion and Euthanasia are controversial issues in medical ethics. Some countries are by-passing these ethical bottlenecks by promulgating their laws, which are supported by their National Medical Associations (NMAs).

The 68<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly held in Chicago, United States of America in 2017 added a new sentence in the Pledge. It states: "I will attend to my own health, well-being and abilities in order to provide care of the highest standard"<sup>22</sup>. For the first time since the Pledge was issued in 1948, it required Physicians to look after their own health and well-being. Medical doctors look after other people and forget to look after themselves. The emphasis on altruism and compassion for patients during the training period leads the medical doctor to forget about self-preservation. I suspect it may be the concern on emerging infectious diseases such as Ebola that focused on the attendants of the patients. The rise of autonomy in the context of the Physician-Patient relationship may be the counter movement to paternalism in health care. Everyone agrees that the autonomy of the patient is paramount. What of the autonomy of the Physician? The Physician also has his/her rights and needs to protect them. We talk about the vulnerable in the society and how to take care of them. Sometimes the Physician is the vulnerable one both in practice and in research.

## **RESEARCH ETHICS**

To apply Bioethical Principles, Article 18 of the UNESCO Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights incorporates the following:

### **A. Decision-making**

Professionalism, honesty, integrity and transparency in decision-making should be promoted, in particular declaration of all conflicts of interest and appropriate sharing of knowledge. Every endeavor should be made to use the best available scientific knowledge and methodology in addressing and periodically reviewing bioethical issues.

### **B. Ethics Committees**

Independent, multidisciplinary and pluralistic ethics committees should be established, promoted and supported at appropriate level in order to:

- a) Assess the relevant ethical, legal, scientific and social issues related to research projects involving human beings.
- b) Provide advice on ethical problems in clinical settings.
- c) Assess scientific and technological developments, formulate recommendations and contribute to the preparation of guidelines and issues within the scope of the Declaration.

The WHO has operational guidelines for Ethics Committees. There is also the National Code of Health Research in Nigeria (2006). The standard operating procedure (SOP) of the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the University of Port Harcourt was approved at the 391<sup>st</sup> Meeting (Extraordinary) of Senate in January, 2013. The REC of the University of Port Harcourt, reviews research proposals from the University

while the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital has a separate one.

The Faculty of Education of the University of Port Harcourt produces Postgraduates in different fields. Not one of their Graduate student's proposals has passed through the REC. According to international best practices, it is wrong. For other Faculties that their proposals pass through REC, correction of the proposals by members of REC is taken as an affront on the Supervisors of the candidates. This is far from the truth. The corrections are made according to guidelines for writing proposals and the outcome is to improve on the proposals and therefore, good dissertations. The Board of the School of Graduate Studies has found it difficult to make the University REC, a 'clearing house' for proposals submitted to the Graduate School. If the Graduate School, was functioning properly, it should not accept any dissertation whose proposal did not pass through the University REC or any other recognized Institutional Review Board (IRB). The numbers of proposals that passed through REC in 2017 and 2018 are shown in Table 2.

**TABLE 2: PROPOSALS VETTED BY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

S/NO.	TITLE	2017	2018
1.	Total number submitted	199	270
2.	Approved as submitted	30 (15.1%)	60 (22.2%)
3.	To be approved after minor corrections	77 (38.7%)	140 (51.8%)
4.	Re-write and Re-submit	59 (29.6%)	42 (15.6%)
5.	Not vetted on meeting date	33 (16.6%)	28 (10.4%)

The Board of the School of Graduate Studies has the responsibility to direct all Faculties to pass their candidate's proposals through the university's REC. It will make for improved standard of Dissertations produced by the School.

### **Usefulness of Research Ethics**

There are several reasons why it is important to adhere to ethical norms in research, these include:

1. Norms promote the aims of research such as knowledge, truth and avoidance of error. For example, prohibitions against fabrication, falsifying or misrepresenting research data promote truth and minimize error.
2. Since research often involves a great deal of co-operation and co-ordination among different disciplines and institutions, ethical standards promote values such as trust, accountability mutual respect and fairness that are essential to collaborative work.
3. Many of the ethical norms ensure that researchers are accountable to the public.
4. Ethical norms in research build public support for research. People are more likely to fund a research project if they can trust the quality and integrity of the research.
5. Many norms of research, promote a variety of other moral and social values, such as social responsibility, human rights, animal welfare, compliance with law, public health and safety.

### **ANIMAL ETHICS**

Discussing research ethics leads one to animal ethics. Nuremberg Code No. 3 states, "The experiment (on human subject) should be so designed and based on the results of animal experimentation and a knowledge of the natural history of disease or other problem under study, that anticipated results will justify the performance of the experiment".



All ethical viewpoints defending the protection of animals broaden the scope of the traditional position by claiming that the ability to suffer is the key point and hence sentient beings should be protected as part of the moral community. Singer<sup>23</sup> argues for a utilitarian animal ethics based on equal consideration of interests of sentient beings in combination with the criterion of the ability to feel pain. Regan<sup>24</sup>, using Kantian approach claims instead that sentient beings who try to see themselves as “subjects of life” do have an “inherent value” which provides defensible moral rights. These moral rights impose *prima facie* duties for human beings towards animals. Virtue ethics calls for one not to undermine the aspiration of good life by acting in a cruel way towards animals but acknowledge the animal-like part of one’s existence<sup>15</sup>.

Those in Veterinary Medicine have their Research Ethics Committees and their code of conduct which they follow very passionately. The philosophical issues for those outside the field include:

- i. Why do non-human animals deserve protection?
- ii. Do non-human animals have rights?
- iii. What is the difference between animal rights and animal welfare?
- iv. If non-human animals do not have rights, do they deserve protection?

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS**

Environmental ethics deals with the moral dimension of the relationship between humans and non-human nature such as, animals, plants, natural resources, ecosystems, landscapes, as well as the biosphere and the cosmos. The distinction between humans and non-human nature is because it is only humans who are able to reason on the consequences of their actions

which may influence the whole of nature in a positive or negative way. Establishment of environmental ethics as an academic discipline dates back to the 1970s when issues of vital importance emerged. These were:

- Global threat to natural basis of existence
- The growing number of extinct species
- The destruction of ecosystems and natural resources
- Dangers of technological developments such as nuclear power and its radioactive wastes and the new technologies of genetic engineering.

Two Valedictory lectures have dealt with environmental issues:

- i. Professor S. N. Okiwelu (Not listed, May 2011) – Global Environment Advocacy – A Thriving Tower of Babel?
- ii. Professor B. A. Eheazu (Lecture No. 6, March 2016) – Situational Challenges of Environmental Degradation in Nigeria: Adult Education as a Response.

Environmental ethics is commonly divided into two distinct areas<sup>25</sup>:

- i) Anthropocentrism and
- ii) Non-anthropocentrism.

Anthropocentric approach claims that values are relational and require a rational being, hence animals and non-human nature are not *per se* objects of morality, unless indirectly, by virtue of a surrogate decision-maker.

Non-anthropocentrism (or physiocentrism) consists of three main branches:

1. Pathocentrism argues that all sentient beings deserve moral consideration and protection.

2. Biocentrism claims that all beings should be part of the moral community.
3. Ecocentrism argues that the whole of nature deserves moral protection either according to individualistic or holistic approach.
  - a) Individualistic approach states that all “things” in nature are bearers of moral values and are of equal moral worth.
  - b) Holistic approach has 3 main positions:
    - i) Ecofeminism is a belief that there is a parallel between the systems of domination that affect both women and nature. The idea that nature is as irrational and passive as well as needing to be controlled by humans<sup>26</sup>.
    - ii) Deep Ecology states the view that humans should view themselves as being part of and not distinct from natural world by virtue of a refined notion of self. All living things have an equal right to flourish (“Biospherical egalitarianism”).
    - iii) Land ethics argues that one should stop treating the land as a mere resource, but view it as a precious source of energy. Aldo Leopold<sup>27</sup>, the founder of Land ethics, famously claims: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise”.

It is nice to propagate the ethical basis of environmental education and awareness because it supports a sustainable lifestyle in the society. If we overuse or misuse resources and energy from fossil fuels, our future generations will suffer. During the olden days, people valued mountains, rivers,

forests, trees and several animals. Thus much of nature was venerated and protected.

### **WORK ETHICS**

Work ethics or social workplace ethics may be defined as a just and fair conduct at work to achieve maximum productivity which goes beyond observing laid down laws and regulations of the workplace. It means compliance with moral obligations of good performance at work and behaving in a way people ought to act to contribute maximally to organizational goals<sup>28</sup>.

We are in the University system. The University used to be called the 'ivory tower'. Those in the University used to look at the society or community around them and comment or criticize their actions. The community did not bother to look at what was happening in the University. Now with the proliferation of Universities, they have become and are run like business institutions. They are subject to competition for clients and financial success just like other business enterprises. Not only the University managers have the final word but students (clients), parents (stakeholders) and taxpayers also have something to say about what is right or wrong with the University.

Universities are academic institutions whose functions include: the discovery, propagation and perpetuation of ideas, knowledge and dissemination of truth. Truth, however, can be elusive and subjective depending on other intervening factors like culture, gender and ethical commitments of the person disseminating it. The primary duty of a University lecturer is to seek and state the truth and exhibit self-discipline while transmitting knowledge. In the University, lecturers do not only encourage their students to pursue education, but also uphold before them the best academic and ethical standards of

their disciplines. They are expected to demonstrate respect for students, conduct and ensure that evaluation of students is genuine without discriminatory treatment, exploitation and sexual harassment as it is often reported. It is important to distinguish between ideologies and personalization whether among staff or between students and lecturers. The lecturers need to uphold free academic enquiry and tolerate differences of opinion without personalization.

The vision statement of the University states, “The University of Port Harcourt aims to be ranked amongst the best Universities in Africa, renowned for its teaching, research, creativity and innovations”. The University management needs to instill that zeal in its staff and students to achieve such a goal. Many Universities now have “Code of Conduct” for its staff and students. You can find them on the internet. Will these codes improve workers behavior?

It is such workplace ethics which defines how university staff should behave in the course of performing their day to day duties and in relating to students and other people. There can hardly be mutual understanding and adequate co-operation without individual and collective application of codes of workplace ethics. It is, in fact difficult to accuse the management of the institution of misconduct and manipulation of resources where there are no clear cut workplace ethics in place. This is especially so, since the introduction of self-supporting programmes in public Universities to enhance their financial base. The institutions now know how unethical behavior can create legal risks for their entrepreneurial enterprises.

## **RELIGIOUS ETHICS**

Religious ethics are moral principles that guide religions and set standard for what is and is not acceptable behavior. Surprisingly, similar from one religion to the other, these fundamental principles flow from the core beliefs and ancient wisdom of religion, as well as its teachers and traditions.

Virtues are standards for ethical, moral conduct – they enable you to look at yourself in the mirror every morning without cringing. Personal virtues such as humility, gratitude and hope honour God or, in the Eastern religion, reflect a higher state of being.

At the beginning of this Valedictory lecture, I gave example of the Golden rule: “Do unto others as you would like them do unto you”. This is the most basic of the personal virtues. The word compassion means, “to suffer with”. Having compassion for others is how believers imitate the infinite kindness and mercy God showers upon them. Humility is a sign of respect for God and awareness that all blessings flow from God to whom all thanks are due. Humility, therefore, is not just a virtue, but also an opposite virtue from the ones that non-religious world prizes.

Many sacred religious texts mention hope. It is one of the three cardinal virtues of Christianity. The other two are faith and love. In the world religions, hope is made possible by human limitations. Most people do not know the future and, because they do not know it, they fear it. Hope reduces this fear. In religion, hope is closely linked with what comes after death. Religious hopefulness is not the same thing as optimism. Optimism is the attitude that things are great. Religious hopefulness is actually built upon the idea that things are not so great, but we cannot see all the pictures. The incompleteness of human knowing is met by the hope that the

world holds more promise than we can see from our limited perspective.

### **CONCLUSION**

We have gone through the concepts of the ethics of life. There is an area we did not touch, that is, evolutionary ethics, because we are discussing values that will make us live optimally. Every discipline has its own ethics. Bioethics with its fifteen principles covers areas in life sciences, emerging technologies, research and virtual ethics. Pure ethical concepts cannot be used unless they are applied to real life problems. Applied ethics deals with more concrete subjects like personal and family issues, professional life situations, state and political affairs. Applied ethics cannot, therefore, be regarded as a distinct science. It is rather the application of science, art and the result of human experience intelligently harnessed.

When I was posted to the Indian Council for Medical Research during my short study period in India in 1985, I saw on their notice board, the poem “Desiderata”. Desiderata are technically, things considered necessary or highly desirable or something lacked and wanted. The poem copyright A962402 was registered by Max Ehrmann, an American writer in January 1927 and renewed by his widow, Bertha K. Ehrmann in 1954. In August 1971, the poem was published in Success Unlimited Magazine without permission. In a 1976 lawsuit against this magazine Publisher, Combined Registry Co., the court ruled ( and subsequently the 7<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeal upheld) that the copyright had been forfeited because the poem had been authorized for publication without a copyright notice in the 1940s – and that the poem was therefore, in the public domain.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, you should please request all Faculties in this University to place this poem on their main notice boards at the beginning of every session. It may change the lives of some students for good. Permit me to read:

**DESIDERATA – WORDS FOR LIFE**

Go placidly amid the noise and haste,  
And remember what peace there may be in silence.  
As far as possible without surrender be on good terms with all persons  
Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others,  
Even the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons,  
They are vexations to the spirit.  
If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain and bitter;  
For always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.  
Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.

Keep interested in your career, however humble;  
It is real possession in the changing fortunes of time.  
Exercise caution in your business affairs; for the world is full of trickery  
But let this not blind you to what virtue there is;  
Many persons strive for high ideals; and everywhere is full of heroism.

Be yourself.  
Especially, do not feign affection.  
Neither be cynical about love;  
For in the face of all aridity and disenchantment  
It is as perennial as the grass.



Take kindly the counsel of the years,  
Gracefully surrendering the things of youth  
Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune.  
But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings.  
Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.  
Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself.

You are a child of the universe  
No less than the trees and the stars;  
You have a right to be here.  
And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is  
unfolding as it should.  
Therefore be at peace with God,  
Whatever you conceive Him to be,  
And whatever your labors and aspirations,  
In the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your soul.

With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams,  
It is still a beautiful world.  
Be cheerful.  
Strive to be happy.

**I sincerely thank you for your patience and attention.**

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## CITATION



**PROFESSOR VICTOR CHUKWUMA WAKWE**  
*Professor of Chemical Pathology*

Victor Chukwuma Wakwe was born on 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1949 in Abonema, Rivers State. He is a native of Aboh Kingdom in Ndokwa East LGA of Delta State. He attended Sacred Heart School, Calabar for the First School Leaving Certificate (1961) and St. Patrick's College, Calabar, for the West African School Certificate (1966). He obtained the General Certificate of Education, Advanced Level, from the College of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt in 1974. In the same year he was admitted into the College of Medicine of the University of Lagos. After the first Professional examination in 1976, he was offered a scholarship of the University of Lagos to study an intercalated BSc. Honours degree in Biochemistry. This he obtained in 1977 and joined the next batch of medical students to complete the MBBS degree in 1980.

After the usual House job and Youth Corps, Prof. Wakwe started the Residency Programme in Lagos University Teaching Hospital in 1982. During the protracted Doctors strike in 1984, when all doctors were sacked by the Military regime, he went to Ghandigram Institute of Rural Health and Family Welfare Trust in Ambathurai, India, for

a Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Nutrition and Dietetics. That served as his one-year abroad. The one-year abroad programme for Resident Doctors had been stopped by the Military Government. The Postgraduate Diploma course was sponsored by the Indian Government.

Professor Wakwe came back to the country in 1985 to complete his Residency Programme. He also registered for a Masters Course in Clinical Pathology for which he was given a scholarship by the University of Lagos. He obtained the Fellowship of the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria in 1988 and defended the Master of Philosophy thesis that was delayed in 1989. He could not upgrade the MPhil to a PhD because his Supervisor, the only PhD in Clinical Pathology in Nigeria had left the appointment of the University of Lagos. In 1994 he got the Fellowship of the West African College of Physicians in Laboratory Medicine.

The appointment as Lecturer 1 in the University of Port Harcourt and Honorary Consultant in the Teaching Hospital came in 1988. It was his coming to University of Port Harcourt that encouraged Dr. Ken Katchy, the then Acting Head of the single Pathology Department, to put pressure on the University authorities, to split the department into its units. Immediately this was achieved in 1989, Dr. Ken Katchy went on Sabbatical leave and from there to leave of absence. He did not come back to the University. The task of running the four Pathology Departments was left to the then Dr. Wakwe and the newly recruited Lecturer 2s who were starting their Residency Training. Prof. Wakwe was the first Co-ordinator of Pathology Division in the University. With a coming accreditation for Residency Training in Pathology, the Teaching Hospital also had to split the Pathology Department into Anatomic Pathology, Chemical Pathology, Haematology & Blood Transfusion and Medical Microbiology in 1990. The accreditation signalled the beginning of the Residency Training Programme in Laboratory Medicine at the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital (UPTH).

Dr. Wakwe rose from Lecturer 1 in 1988 to Professor of Chemical Pathology in 2003. He was the first Professor of Pathology in the University of Port Harcourt. He gave the 46<sup>th</sup> inaugural lecture in 2005 to explain the role of Pathology in Medical Practice and in Research. He has written several papers in Metabolism, Nutrition and Medical Ethics. He has examined in many Universities in the country and is a member of many professional bodies. He also served the University and Hospital in many capacities. He continues to serve his home Community as a High Chief since his father died in 1992.

For Postgraduate Medical education, Professor Wakwe has been an examiner for the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria and the West African College of Physicians since 1993. He served as Chairman of the Faculty of Pathology of the National College from 2002 to 2005, member of the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (2002-2006), Treasurer of the National College (2006-2009), Vice President of the National College (2010-2011) and President of the National College from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013. As the President of the College he was the Chairman of the Senate and Governing Board of the National Postgraduate Medical College for those two years. Presently, he is the Chairman of the Past President's Forum of the National College and Chairman of the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Port Harcourt.

Professor Wakwe received an Honorary Fellowship of the Colleges of Medicine of South Africa in January 2012. He is married to an unassuming wife with 3 children, a son and two daughters. The last daughter is a Senior Resident Doctor in the Department of Otorhinolaryngology in the Lagos University Teaching Hospital.

**Professor Ndowa E. S. Lale**  
Vice Chancellor