

MAN, RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY: TOWARDS A NORMATIVE VISION OF THE HUMAN PERSON

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Abstract

This paper seeks to give a formidable normative structure that is geared towards human development. This is premised on the fact that the human person has a composite nature. That is, man, having a material and a spiritual nature. These natures cum dimensions in the human person does not in any way reduce the religio-cultural and social dimension of the human person. In fact, they enhance it the more. This paper argues that man is yet to fully realize some level of satisfaction in the way it relates with its fellow human being as a social being; this is evident in the different crimes against humanity that are perpetuated everyday for instance, abuse of minors, rape, robbery and other sexist practices. These anomalies are still very much evident in the religious palace wherein religion that ought to give a kind of solace to humanity, is being used as a tool for exploitation thereby creating an unhealthy religious belief system in the way religious beliefs are being handled. The paper further argues that the human person will only progress if there is a perfect use of reason to actualize his belief system, and further enhances the best way to relate well with his fellow human being. This is where the irreplaceable tools of philosophy come in as it will help in no small measure in sharpening the belief system of the human person on how to leave a sound life in the society and to get rid of the unhealthy sexist tendencies, abuses of minor and other atrocities.

Keywords: Man, Religion, Society, Philosophy, Ethics, Interactionism

Introduction

The different theories on the origin of mankind like that of Charles Darwin, Big Bang, Creation story of the Semitic tradition as recorded in the Holy Bible and a host of others, have presented an aspect of the human person that cannot be denied by any successive theories. This aspect is the fact that the human person is a social being that interacts. Many social institutions like the family, school, age grade, political party and so on, have laid credence to this fact. In other words, the different evolutionary theories have further proven that the human person is a relational being. As the human person continues to evolve, this relationship continues to spread also; both from the vertical perspective and the horizontal perspective. This simply means that man who is a social being is also a religious being; this is where his vertical relationship with the Supreme Being is also a cause for concern. This is so because it is believed that the Supreme Being has strong influence in the daily growth of the human person and as such, an effective relationship with him becomes expedient.

Be that as it may, there are certain actions and activities that have posed threats to the sincerity of these interactions and relationships judging from the fact of negative socio-religious trends: where the human person no longer values the sanctity of their relationship with the Supreme Being; where people use the name of the Supreme Being to cajole and deceive people; where human beings no longer have fear of the sacred and of sacred places; where humanity no longer appreciates the uniqueness of their interaction and relationship with their fellow beings. While some have tailored these disappointing acts to modernism, some others have said that all of these atrocities have long been there and as such there is no remedy.

The question now is, is it really true there is no remedy to the atrocities that have threatened peaceful coexistence? Can there be a remedy to the way people are easily deceived to do things in the name of the Supreme? Can human relationship ever improve in the light of modernism? Or is it the case that the older the crime, the somewhat impossibility of a solution? Now, this work does not intend to dwell on what has been in the past and in the present but to suggest that there is a remedy in view. This remedy is borne out by the rich tools of philosophy as a normative discipline that helps in interrogating certain anomalies in the society.

The method to be adopted in this work is speculative, prescriptive and critical. A close look at the methods that will be employed in this work shows that they are methods that are sole exclusive of philosophy.

However, let it be known here that the use of the term 'man' is for both sexes. It means human kind or human being as the case may be. These are names that are all inclusive, in embracing both sexes-male and female of this species of organisms, known by the biological name of Homo Sapiens¹. Following, the descriptive dimension of man, dualists holds that man is a composite being that is made of matter and spirit. This means that man is believed to have a material body and a non-material soul. While, the dualists are of the view that both dimension of man are parallel, the integrationists say that both dimension constitute one substance, man. Be that as it may, the underlining truth is that man who has a material aspect, is known to have a vital force that is non-material.

Man and the Society:

Three sociological theories will help present the path through which this aspect will be taken. The sociological theories are structural functionalism, symbolic interactionism and conflict theory. There is no doubt these theories have their shortcomings because of their adherence to scientific principles and methods. However, attention will be paid to their sociological principles and how they apply to societal interactions.

Structural functionalism depicts the society as a social system consisting of various structures, organizations and institutions, influencing each other and affecting the whole system. It focuses on the function of the institutions and their contribution to the continuity of the social system.² This theory is suggestive of the function or the role an organization play in the growth of a society.

Symbolic Interactionism is interested to know how an individual acquires personal and social characteristics, in particular, self-identity. The theory concludes its assertion that people were not born with the sense of the self. They acquire it through interaction that takes place between them in the society³. There is no doubt, therefore, that this places primacy on the indispensable role of the society as it is the one that is responsible in forming the self-identity of the human person

Conflict Theory presents society as an arena of widespread conflict and struggle at every level of it. Thus, conflict theory sees society to be structured on the patterns that retain the discriminatory *status quo*. It favours some sides and side-lines others. However, the aspect of conflict theory that will be of utmost concern here, is the one that is open to reconciliation in the area of conflict resolution; wherein parties disagree to agree.

A close look at all of these theories, show the reality of interaction and how the society is necessary for the growth and development of the human person. It shows the strength to which every

institution is built. These theories carries with them a normative character in that the society or if you like the community has a strong influence in determining the integrity of the human person.

Man we all know is a social animal. The reality of this assertion is in its ability to be able to interact with its fellow peers. The different areas of socialization are fully suggestive of this reality in the human person. Primarily, man learns cultural discipline and societal norms from the family community which is very important for influencing the human person.

Sociologists have postulated different theories of society. This ranges from the fact that the society is a structurally built system that helps to empower the human person in ascertaining his set goals. A close look at most of the theories of societal development, will help discover that it is centered on the human person. A. Spirkin itemized collective interactions that further strengthens man's existence in the society. According to him, they include the family, the play or instruction groups, the production team and other types of formal and informal collectivity.⁴ It is important to note that the family plays an important role in the psychological development of the human person. The family is a crucial instrument for the development of personality. This is because it is here that the child first comes to know about the basics of existence. In other words, it is here that the child first becomes involved in social life, absorbs its values and standards of behavior, its ways of thought, language and certain value orientations. From the family, the child finds itself in some other association as he grows older.

Apart from the family, other groups and institutions play significant roles in the social development of the human person. These groups or associations have a way of influencing an individual's personality whether for good or for bad but one thing that is sure, is the fact of an influence. Such a group can be the school institution or peer group. All these are societal institution that the human person cannot shy away from because they produce a kind of interaction that is needed in human development. In the different schools for instance, they meet another level of interaction under the influence of non-family members. This is not to say the family level of socialization is in sharp contrast to this institution's form of socialization rather, both run concurrently in that the child while in school realizes that they are judged by their performance and no longer being accepted unconditionally. This is where a partial level of independence emerges from the human person. This is so because they learn a new culture that extends beyond their narrow family culture. This new culture requires a high level of efforts in learning outside the scope of a family but to the wider community. Upon finishing from this institution, are lunched into a more intense

level of socialization that sees them responsible for forming and building the interaction of younger generation. Here most of them are lunched into the life of full adulthood in marriages, work and even colleges. Here they take full responsibilities for all their actions.

The human person is a being that is always in touch with his environment or society as the case may be. This is why it is impossible to separate an individual from the society; because the individual is a product of the society. Their relationship is very cordial. The individual lives and acts within the society. Man is biologically and psychologically equipped to live in the society. This is where the social life of the individual is formed; F.M Anayet Hossain & M. D. Korban Ali note that “social life are dependent on the following such as political life, economic life, voluntary associations, educational associations, method of communications and family”⁵. This is why man is at the center of every political system like the unitary or parliamentary system. This same also holds way in the economic palace where man is at the center of every economic policies like socialism, capitalism, communism and communalism. Man is said to have survived all of these economic systems in their own uniqueness.

Man, who is a social being, is said to be religious too. In fact, some scholars refer to man as a religious animal. Some traditions and culture have opined that you cannot separate religion from their ontology. For instance, the Africans see themselves as notoriously religious. The question now is what is this religious dimension of man all about? This will bring to bare another important aspect of this work.

Religion and Man

Since the main thrust of this work is to build up a healthy religio-social dimension of the human person, it is fitting that having discussed man and his place in the society, man and the notion of religion be also explicated.

The word religion means different things to different people since there is no universally accepted definition of religion. However, from its etymology, the word religion according to Bernard Haring is derived from three Latin words as its root namely, *ligare* which means ‘to bind’ *relegare* which means to unite, or to link and *religio* which means relationship”⁶. From the etymology, one can immediately see that the underlining truth about the term religion is that it has to do with interaction that fosters relationship in order to bind and to link people together. However, the link or relationship here is one that exist between a person and a supreme being that is believed to exist. This divine Supreme Being that is transcendent is an object of worship by the human

person. This is what truly constitutes the essence of religion as Joseph Omoregbe argues:

Religion is essentially a bi-polar phenomenon. On the one end is man (religious man) while on the other end is the transcendent being, the deity he believes to exist and which he worships. Whether such a deity really exists or simply the figment of his imagination of the religious man is not important to the concept of religion, as long as the deity is really believed by the religious man to actually exist. For him, the deity is a reality. The concept of deity is essential to the concept of religion. Hence, where a belief in a deity is lacking, there can be no religion since religion, as we have said, is essentially a relationship established between man and a deity, that is, a transcendent personal being, believed to exist.⁷

The point therefore is that religion carries with it a relationship between man and the Supreme. This simply means that the truth of religion is centred on the existence of a Supreme Being that is transcendent. This Supreme Being is said to be very powerful in that it can determine the life of man to a very large extent. Since this is possible, man is supposed to have good rapport with the Him by a sincere worship of Him. This is where some persons also feel that religion is also a human activity. This is because religion also affects the human person. The belief and reliance on the Supreme Being is an indication of the limitations and weaknesses of the human person. This worship and appeal done to the Supreme Being further shows man's dependence. This is where Galloway's definition of religion becomes necessary. According to him, "religion is man's faith in a power beyond himself whereby he seeks to satisfy emotional needs and gains stability of life, and where he expresses in acts of worship and service"⁸

Religion is likened to a law that is inseparable from man's nature just as the laws of physics and life are inseparable from matter and living beings. This is because the Supreme Being who is believed to be the creator of the world (as evident in many traditions), has given man the longing for his creator and directed man towards him. Ever since the history of mankind began, man has been practicing different forms of worship and piety. In fact, some scholars say there was no nation on the earth that was unattached to a religion and performing its rites in one-way or another. This is because piety is an instinct, a natural feeling deeply rooted in man's being. It can neither be hushed, nor muted in an individual's conscience, nor can the human conscience be prevented from sensing it, or going towards it⁹

Different theories have been postulated for the evolution of religion. We have the sociological, psychological theories of religion and anthropological theories of religion. The Anthropological theory of Religion is propagated by Ludwig Feuerbach in his work, *The Essence of*

Christianity. Here, he states that religion is the creation of man and worship of a projected human self. This projection of himself is a product of the mystery of religion where one seeks help from a higher being. For Feuerbach, the higher being that is projected is man himself whose good deeds or evil deeds are not indifferent to God. He argues thus:

Man- this is the mystery of religion- projects his being into objectivity, and then again makes himself an object to this projected image of himself thus converted into a subject; he thinks of himself, but as the object of an object, of another being than himself. Thus, here, man is an object to God. That man is good or evil is not indifferent to God.¹⁰

The Psychological theory of Religion is advocated by Sigmund Freud in his works, *Totem and Taboo* (1913), *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). In all of these works, Freud argues that religion is a projection of man's childhood neurosis, the continual need of a Father and a reflection of infantile mentality. This simply means that for Freud, religion projects man's inability to grow up; it is like a puerile fixation and stagnancy where man depends on his parents for everything and this have so affected him that he has extended this dependency to an unknown Supreme Being for help.

There exist different sociological theories of religion, but the most prominent of them is in the works of E. B. Tylor titled, *Primitive Culture* (1871) and Emile Durkheim's, *Elementary forms of Religion* (1912). Tylor concludes that religion evolves from ancestor worship. He says: "using the phrase ancestor worship in its broadest sense, as comprehending all worship of the dead, be the of the same blood or not, we conclude that ancestor worship is the root of every religion"¹¹. Joseph Omoregbe states that religion for Emile Durkheim, is a principle of control by the society to continually dominate her citizens. It is the principle of influence, which personified social forces of control in society into a god with all the attributes of society as its qualities¹².

Giving the fact that these three theories of religion are of different perspectives, yet one striking thing is that they have the reality of man as their subject matter.

Religion and its Role in the Society

Religion plays an important role on culture of a society. Every religion is the product of a particular culture within which it grew¹³. It is hard to comprehend any religion without understanding the culture from which it developed. Every culture would certainly have impact in the methods of religion. Certain trends in history will help accelerate this view. For instance, Christian religion grew from the Jewish culture and

one can understand why there is somewhat interrelatedness in both religion notwithstanding some differences though. This is because every society is unique in her cultural displays.

Religion is said to play very vital aspect in the human society where human person interacts in the different institutions whether domestic, economic and political institution. In fact, Shanjendu Nath gave some instances on how religion affect the social structure of the human person. They are in the realm of internal feelings, an external form of social control, and to help in the character formation of the human person.¹⁴ According to him, an important aspect of religion is prayer and different classes of people belonging to different castes of society assemble in religious institutions for performing prayer and worship¹⁵. This praying and fellowshiping together has a way of building the sentiments among themselves and this further influence what they do as a group in the building of the different social institutions.

Religion also has a form of social control following the second aspect of Nath's bifurcation of the roles of religion to society. This is because according to him, the different activities and their different spheres of social life are still influenced by religious rites and ceremonies; such that it becomes possible for people to express their religious feelings through rituals and ceremonies. This is evident in the different occasions of social life like marriages, birth, harvesting, hunting, death and so on. Here, you see the reality of ritual and other ceremonies performed in these occasions. This same rite can be extended to the economic aspect of the society and even in the aspect of the inauguration of a building structure and oath taking. All of these points to the fact that religion plays an important role in the further structuring of the society and its institutions.

Nath went on to state that religion also help to shape the character of an individual¹⁶. According to him, religion brings a sense of social value in the mind of people. This will enable the human person to work in tandem with the norm of society that coheres with basic religious belief. He expresses this thus "in obeying the social laws or to respect the elders and to show sympathy towards the feelings of others, or to discharge the social obligations faithfully, the role of religion is immense".¹⁷ This further proves the indispensable role of religion to the character formation of man wherein he is able to show civility in the ethical dictates of social life.

This view can be liken Loyall Rue's description of the function of religion. He sees the function of religion in the achievement of personal wholeness and social coherence¹⁸. For him, the mythical and the ancillary strategies of religions, shape the emotions and motivations of individuals

in a way that allows them to overrule the innate intuitive morality of their biological heritage in favour of the culturally defined values encoded in myths. This is premised upon the notion that religious myths actually do promote a morality that induces behavior leading to personal wholeness and social cohesion.

Looking at the above roles of religion within the context of human interrelationship, one can see that the role of religion to human society is to lead to a healthy humanity. Be that as it may, there exist some maladies that threatens this strength of humanity. The next session of this work will deal with some challenges that posit threat to human interrelationship.

Factors Militating Against Human Interrelatedness in the Society

This aspect will bring to bear the different ills that are in the society and religious institution that further proved that man is yet to attain the full realization of socio-religious essence. A close look at society, one will notice certain mishap which can be translated as *man's inhumanity to man*, the 'survival of the fittest' instinct and certain corrupt practices, that have tied down man's destiny from the will of progress. It is in the identification of all of these deficiencies that we now ascertain the role of philosophy in enhancing a formidable structure for the formation of the human person. The assessment of these maladies will be taken from different perspectives.

Sexist practices. There is no doubt that the society in which we live is characteristics of different agents, agencies and institution. However, outside this reality is the fact of gender awareness. According Sandra Bem, a psychologist "one cognitive process that seems nearly inevitable in humans is to divide people into groups. We can partition these groups on the basis of race, age, religion, and so on. However, most of the times we split humanity on the basis of gender. The first thing we instantly determine when meeting someone new, is their gender"¹⁹. This view shows the reality of gender consciousness, where people make a great divide of humanity on the basis of gender. With this in mind one is tempted to say this gender realization at people to be done is almost habitual and automatic as Issabela Crespi puts it "this process of categorizing others in terms of gender is both habitual and automatic. It's nearly impossible to suppress the tendency to split the world in half, using gender as the great divider"²⁰. It is interesting to note that this great divide is not bad in itself since nature has made it so. But the part that seem problematic is the reality of subjugation and denigration. Where a particular sex claims to be superior than the other; where a particular sex sees itself as the only qualified sex to attain a particular

height. This has led to the contention between what I call *feminism* and *masculinism*.

In a society where the reality of sexist practices abound, one can lay claim to the sad scenario of denigration. This is evident in burial rites, ownership of properties, domestic chores, political position, naming ceremonies and the likes. Ceremonies like these in some cultures are avenues for such sexist tendencies to be shown.

Rape: This is another act of man's inhumanity to man. It is a violent and forceful sexual act on another. Some to adult, while some others to minors. A. S Hornby defines rape as the crime of forcing somebody to have sex with one especially with violence"²¹. This means that rape involves the use of force. In other words, it is against the will of the person who is under compulsion to do so. In the same vein, Briganeti and Egbonimali see rape as an act of sexual violence that involves intercourse without consent or against someone being willing to engage in the act²². Samuel Okafor-Udah brought about another dimension of rape that occurs. According to him, this does not have to do with physical violence as such but a deception of a kind with the use of gift. He argues thus "an adult of any age range tactfully seduces a child of a tender age for either marriage or sex with an enticing gift and the child after collecting same willingly gives in for it with the adult, it is said to be rape as well²³. He also went further to state that this form rape is viewed as "a sex crime carried out by pathological men or women who were unable to control their own sexual desires"²⁴. In a nut shell, rape is an unlawful sexual intercourse with someone with or without the use of force in order to achieve sexual gratification. Different countries and societies have had a share of this anomaly. Samuel Okafor gave the Nigerian situation on rape when he noted:

Rape is a global problem with women and children being mostly vulnerable. They are the ones bearing the brunt of this evil in every society of the world ... there are several cases, which are very irritating. Now and then, it is reported that a teacher has raped a student. A religious leader his flock. Robbers have raped their victim. A man has raped a sister-in-law or daughter -in-law. A master has raped a housemaid. A security man has raped his master's wife. A boss has raped his staff. A father has raped his daughter. A young man has raped his grandmother. A minor has raped a fellow minor. A traditional ruler has raped a subject. An 80 year old man has raped an 8 year old girl.²⁵ A close look at the above shows that the case of rape has crossed through different sections of a society, ranging from the political, religious, social, traditional sphere. Such exploitation have eaten deep into the fabric of

the system. Thus the progression of the percentage over the cause of years has always been in the increase.

Child Abuse: This another anomaly that has threatened societal cohesion. A child is one who has not attained the status of an adult. The child is often judged as one between the age brackets of 7 to 14. Any harm done to persons of this age bracket is termed child abuse; however, it is interesting to note that the society have been guilty of this over time. According to Slavka Michancova, research reveals that about twenty percent of women and five to ten percent of men worldwide were victims of child sexual abuse (CSA)²⁶. Beauty, following the Scope of Child Abuse Problem U.S. 2005 Data, asserts that:

Child abuse is a worldwide problem which is carried out by the strong on the weak, affecting children from birth to 18 years plus of age. The most recent US data on the scope of child abuse problem dates from 2005, during which 3.3 million reports of abuse and neglect were filled. About 60 percent of these reports warranted investigation with one-half of these allegations substantiated. It further stated, that these data indicate the incidence of child abuse and neglect to be 12.1 per 1,000 children; 1,460 children (four percent per day) died in 2005 as a result of inflicting trauma with more than 77 percent of these deaths in children less than 4 years of age.²⁷

From the above, it shows that child abuse cuts across different states of the world giving the fact that it is a worldwide affair. This act is often done by the strong to inflict pain on the weak. It should also be noted that parents are also part of those who abuse their children. They do this on the ground that they have absolute control over the affairs of their children as such, their biddings must be obeyed. Care must be taken because this act is a crime that is punishable by law. Thus, Michancova states that child sexual abuse is a serious crime that represent massive violation of human rights and generates long-term negative impact in various aspects of victims' lives.²⁸

Violence: Religious and social violence have become the order of the day - where conflicts between people of different religions and social sects reigns and where the different religions try to prove the supremacy of their religion via violence. For example, in some areas of Nigeria, Muslims cannot live peacefully with Christians. Commenting on the bane of ethno-religious crisis, George Asadu says:

Though religion has played vital role in the society, and has contributed immensely to the national development of this country, it has also been wrongly used by some ethnic groups to afflict this country severally with conflicts leading to wanton destruction of properties and loss of human lives. Obviously, there has been too much blood letting in this country resulting from ethnic and religious conflict which is threatening the very foundation of Nigeria's corporate existence as a nation. The menance of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria is fast eroding the core socio-cultural and religious value which forbids murder, coverteousness ... this has hampered the economic growth of this country to such a great extent that poverty has engulfed the majority of the citizen. Worst still, the mayhems have produced many disabled persons, orphans and widows and (widowers) ...²⁹

The same is true of the political sphere of the state, where political actors do not really understand what political rivalry is all about. People see the differences in party alliances as differences of humanity and as a result all forms of violence are being perpetrated to pull the other person down. The same is true of the educational and social sectors. This is evident where members of a particular schools resort to violence to prove the supremacy of their school. Where some School Proprietors resort to blackmail and give negative and unfounded reasons why students should not be enrolled in another school due to unhealthy competition.

Racial Discrimination/Tribalism: Racism and ethnic bigotry are another forms of malady that has affected the society. This is almost synonymous with religious and social violence. This is where people gets what and how due to cultural affiliation. Where a black man feels comfortable with his fellow blacks and does not want to associate with the white. On the other hand, when a white man sees himself as superior to the blacks. This is also evident in a multicultural state like Nigeria for instance. In a situation when there is social hegemony and nepotism about who get a particular position. Where a Yoruba man feels comfortable with Yoruba people alone, or Hausa people do same with their fellow Hausa. Or the Igbo the same with theirs. This racist cum ethnic biases further strengthens the wrong use of *son of the soil syndrome*. Such a myopic view about life has a way of playing negatively in the normative vision of the human person

Other maladies include Deception and exploitation by some religious ministers on their subjects. This is evident when so called ministers of God blackmail the conscience of their faithful in order to get something material from them. Where the sacrilegious acts have become

the order of the day. The sin of simony have so rocked some religious institutions that you now begin to ask the way forward about authentic worship. Is it the case of the parading of a white man in Kenya whom they claim is Jesus? Or the one who asks his believers to eat grass and serpent? Or the religious leaders who ask his followers to kill in the name religion? All of these threaten societal cohesion.

Even the different **Corruption practices** in the different states are not left out. This ranges from stealing, robbery, kidnapping, electoral fraud; academic fraud and other social menaces. All of these menaces serves as clogs in the will of progress in any given state.

Philosophical Principles and Religio-Cultural Relationship: Towards a Normative Vision of the Human Person

Here, the irreplaceable tool of philosophy will be harnessed. Philosophy as a normative discipline is from two Greek words, *philos* and *Sophia*, meaning love of wisdom. A close look at the nature of philosophy will show that man is placed at the center of it all. This is as a result of man's quest to know more about reality. Williams Aso captures this clearly when he says "man as the subject of philosophy has unquenchable thirst for knowledge not only for empirical realities alone but also phenomenal realities and everything that concern human experience and the universe in general".³⁰ It is in this quest for the normative vision of the human person that the ethical principles of philosophy will be harnessed.

The ethical principles will help in carving out a normative vision of the human person; this is because ethics which is a core branch of philosophy is one that permeates virtually all aspect of life. It is a descriptive, prescriptive and normative discipline. Its normative vision will see to the formulation of the moral order of actions that are not adjudged by personal feelings or emotions, but within the overall ground of moral values and norms. Morality is not ruled by what a person feels alone or think alone. There must be an objective way of looking at morality that will help get rid of socio-religious maladies. In doing this, there must be a consideration for others. This is where the moral justification of 'otherness' comes in. In Paul Ricoeur's work titled *Oneself as Another*, 'otherness' is tied to the *self* and this *self* has a responsibility of preserving 'others'³¹. Martin Buber's intersubjectivity philosophy of dialogue, came up with the *I and Thou* interaction that presents the human person that is always in constant interaction with themselves giving the fact that all are of one substance. Edmund Hurssel gave a phenomenological approach to this normative vision when he came up with the theory of experiencing 'others' as myself³². Here, the consideration of the well being of others must first be considered.

Anyone who thinks of this will not rape, or cajole people in the name of religion.

Even the case of unhealthy sexist practices is not left out in the struggle to build a normative vision of the human person. Thus, in Simone de Beauvoir's work *The Second Sex*, it clearly stated that she was out rightly against patriarchy supremacy and labeling of women. In this work, Simone argues that women is the *other*. It is from this notion, othering as a philosophical term takes on the notion of prejudice, inequality, marginality³³. This is so because while othering is used to describe those who belong to a subordinate social category, otherness on the other hand, refers to the characteristics of the other that is not to be stereotype as inferior.

As for the case of racial discrimination and ethnic bigotry, our knowledge of substance and accidents in metaphysics (a branch of philosophy) shows that every human person shares one substance – the humanity of the human person. The humanness of the white man or the black man or as evident in the different ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Efik or Ijaw is not lesser or higher than the humanness of the Fulani, Tiv, Idoma, Esan or Egede as the case may be. We all share one humanity. The fact that one is a white man or a black man or Igbo, Yoruba or Hausa is simply accidental to the being of the individual person.³⁴

Emmanuel Levinas theory of *alterity* and *otherness* is not out of place. The French philosopher highlighted the need to think of the *other*. His *alterity* expresses yet again a normative vision of the human person. This means considering the wellbeing of others. It is in doing this Francis Ikhianosime says that Levinas in his alterity is “trying to safeguard the other from violation, oppression and inferiorization, hence, his use of Alterity begins with a sense of responsibility to the other”.³⁵ Levinas preoccupation here is in the case of having a responsibility towards the well being of others and not for the other to be discriminated upon all subjected to all forms of denigration.

A furtherance to this normative formation of the human person can be assessed from Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative. “Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law”³⁶. This formulation seeks an objective method of doing things in the society and in religious palace. The second formulation of his categorical imperative “Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only”³⁷ Since we live in a society, the wellbeing of others must be considered. None should let his non-challant attitude or negligence to cause harm to another as Richard Wollheim says argues “every action that occurs within a society and rises at all above the level

of triviality is bound to impinge upon other members of that society³⁸ this simply means that any act of neglect done by one is capable of causing damage to everyone. Wollheim went further to state that “ the only actions that are unconditionally exempt from the jurisdiction of the state are of the order of brushing one’s teeth³⁹ however, I beg to disagree here that not brushing a teeth affect the individual alone, it also affect those he communicate with; that is, those of low immune system.

John. S. Mill’s philosophical influence is evident in his defense of utilitarianism and liberalism. Mill’s utilitarianism assesses actions and institutions in terms of their effects on human happiness and enjoins us to perform actions and design institutions so that they promote in one formulation, maximize human happiness⁴⁰ this further shows that Mill’s utilitarianism is a progressive theory for human development. Although, Mill’s Utilitarianism has its own shortcoming, yet his principle on liberty, individuality and solidarity has much to say on the dignity of others.

It should be noted that human freedom is not meant to be an impediment to authentic relationship between persons rather it should be a bridge to aid human advancement and foster morality. It is painful to note that people use freedom in the wrong way. For some the freedom of the will is an avenue for them to be violent and as a result see their views as the most superior. The normative vision of the human person here calls for a proper harnessing the rational ethics of freedom. This means the kind of freedom that is guided by rationality. It therefore means that the human person must continually live in a manner that justifies rationality. This is because, if man does not take advantage of his rationality, he may be steeped on a path of self-annihilation⁴¹ Philosophers down the ages have been passionate about doing a defence for an authentic relationship of the human person. They do this because of the belief that the human person is a relational being.

Even the African traditional society recognizes this interaction of the human person. This is because Africans conceive of the human person from the descriptive point of view and the normative point of view. While the descriptive point of view refers to the biological frame work of the human person; but the normative aspect of the human person draws strength from the sense of the community. In order words, Africans holds that for one to truly realize himself, he must be a part of the community. African ontology is communalistic; it is part of the unique identity of Africans thus Frank Ndubuisi says “in African metaphysics, the self is conceived essentially towards others; that is, a ‘being-with-others’. The African is not just a human being but essentially a ‘being-with’. Consequently it is the community who makes the individuals, because of his relationship with others in the community⁴².

Jack Aigbodioh on his part holds that, African traditional (i.e. indigenous) cultures are noted by anthropological and sociological scholars alike for their communalistic form of life, which emphasizes the humanistic values of the co-dependency ethos with its universalistic appeal to equality and intersubjective recognition⁴³. In fact, in African ontology, the human person fully realizes itself in the community. When Mbiti says that, the African says to himself, "I am because we are, the "we" referred to here is not an additive 'we' but a thoroughly fused collective 'we'⁴⁴. To further buttress this, Aigbodioh concludes that communalism, or its cognate communitarianism (from community), is a term used to express the peculiar cohesive and integrative character of African traditional society⁴⁵.

It becomes pertinent to state that man relates as long as he exists and keeping with the norms of authentic relationship will help make the society a better place

Conclusion

In this work, we have succeeded in making an exposition of the notion of man and how he cannot be separated from the activities of the society. This is translatable from the perspective of the domestic interaction that exist in the family, the school and other social institutions. All of these sociological strata depicts the reality of interaction.

The work also made an assessment of religion from its etymology to the different theories that are associated with it. In fact the sociological theory as exposed by Emile Durkheim, the Anthropological as espoused by Ludwig Feuerbach and the psychological as espoused by Freud shows that the religion has man as its subject matter and this man in in constant relationship whether with his fellow men or with the supreme.

The work also argues that although man is seen as a being that is in constant relationship, yet this relationship has not be fully realized judging from the fact that different ills are perpetrated daily in our world. Ills like rape, sexist practices, ethnicism, violence, nepotism and the likes.

Be that as it may the paper concludes that only the principles of philosophy can provide a normative tools from the enhancement of the relationship and interrelatedness of the human person. To achieve this, there must be a proper adoption of some ethical moral principles that helps to foster cohesion in all strata of humanity. This principle is the need to consider one's good and the good of the 'others'. This means seeing others as having the same essence with set goals.

Endnotes

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