

The Dignity of the Human Person amidst Contemporary Ideologies

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Abstract

One of the most recurring concepts in the history of intellectual exploration is the concept of the human person and human dignity. It is the case because; every discourse revolves and centres on the human person. There seems to be no discussion among scholars both secular and religious that does not revolves around the dignity of the human person. The reign of secularism is one ideology that has given birth to several ideologies such as individualism, relativism, humanism, Marxism, and materialism. Humanity is suffering due to the emergence of these ideologies. The concepts “human dignity and human life” have been bastardized by many contemporary ideologies which are fast gaining momentum; thus altering the original idea about the nature and sacredness of human life which describes the need to preserve it. New threats such as genocide, euthanasia, and abortion diminish human dignity and life. Although, the Nigerian society which is seen as a religious country has not yet attained the pedestal in scientific discoveries and research, however, she is not excluded from the scourges of these perverse contemporary ideologies which are reflected in the lives of many Nigerian today. The infamous ENDSARS 2020 protest where young persons moved and stood against police brutality is one of such events that highlight the abuse of human dignity. Every human being has a dignity that must be protected and respected. It is in the quest to protect this dignity that laws are drafted and enacted. This paper aims to draw attention to the need for uplifting the human person, and defence of the dignity and rights of persons, particularly in the face of contemporary ideologies and oppressive political regimes like our country Nigeria.

Key Words: Human Person, Human Dignity, Ideologies, Secularism, Humanism

Introduction:

Recently, the concept, “human dignity” has been at the forefront of many discussions. This concept of human dignity has been a central issue of many philosophical inquiries. Most of the explanations emphasized the rational capacities and freedom of the human person. In fact, there seems to be no discussions among existential philosophers that do not revolve around the dignity of the human person. The reason for this development may be adduced to the fact that all studies, researches, and speeches have the human person at their centre. According to Beljan Enaya and Villaroya Franjon (2020), “There is no way the human person is talked about without allusions being made to the dignity of the human person”. With the emergence of several ideologies in our world today, the human person and the sacredness of human life which characterizes every human person is being threatened like never before. The reign of secularism as the foremost of these adverse ideologies which have birthed several ideologies such as individualism, relativism, humanism, Marxism materialism, and among others, is fashioned to repress all sense of the dignity of the human person. The human person, within the operatives, configurations, and determinations of these ideologies is considered not an end in itself, but a means to attaining other ends.

There are various ways of looking at the human person: culturally, socially, and psychologically; but the most challenging of all seems to be the ontological. The philosopher is called upon daily to decipher the essence and ultimate meaning of human existence. This paper reasserts the dignity of the human person against materialism and other reductionist philosophies. Contemporary ideologies that reduce the human person to a mechanistic or determined object violate the dignity of the human person. Rather than existing only as a mechanistic or determined object, the human person exists as a free, unrepeatable object. They draw attention to the sensation of the heart of the person and the relevance of lived experience. Personalism restores humans effectively as a substantial part of philosophical anthropology, recognizing that any complete philosophy of the human person demands effectively to be treated as more than just irrational passions. Human dignity and human rights are essential elements of an organized human society. Human dignity is the foundation of human rights. Human dignity is violated whenever human rights are not respected.

It is important to state at this point that in contemporary philosophy

especially in existentialism, we always refer to the human person as a concrete subject and a fellow man, stressing the fact that the human person is not just an abstract and logically defined concept, but more significantly a concretely existing subject who co-exist with his fellow human persons and ordained for interpersonal relationship.

On the Metaphysics of the Person

The evolution of the idea of a person is laden with some characterization of the subject based on certain criteria. A person has been explained as the state of being of a human individual based on a certain criterion. Hence, being a human is insufficient for being a person. To be a person then, the human being must function in a certain way.

In his *De persona et duabus Naturis*, Boethius (524) cited in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Vol 14, p. 166) held that person is an individual substance of a rational nature". For him then, a person is predicated only on intellectual beings. Thus rationality is for Boethius, the criterion that qualifies a human being as a human person. It is important to say that Omoregbe explained this rationality to imply consciousness even of consciousness itself. For Omoregbe (1991), it is not enough for a person conscious, he must be conscious of the fact that he is conscious...he must be aware of his consciousness. A viable idea of a human person requires some understanding of being and functionality. It is important to state that action follows from being, existence (being) proceeds functionality. In so far as it is that which exists that function. In considering persons, functionality need not be given primacy over being. It is worth noting that anchoring the human person to certain functions, paved the way for the abuse of the human person and human dignity and worth. Seeing a human person from the level of functionality narrows the scope of the person.

The idea of a person is an important aspect of Wojtyla's metaphysics. The human person, for him, is a person with consciousness. For Wojtyla (1979) "both action and conscious acting tell us of the dynamism proper to man as a person." Consciousness is an important aspect of the human person. It is through conscious experience that the human person can act properly. The human soul is a spiritual substance, whose natural properties are reason and freedom, which actualizes the spirituality of the human being and consequently, serve to principally actualize the human person.

It is important to state at this point that in Wojtyla's account of a person, man is an objective reality. This is expressed in his concept of

“suppositum”, metaphysical categories he will preserve and upon which he will build. “Suppositum” by definition is an individual that is philosophically substance or subject. Suppositum points to being the subject itself or points to a subject as a being. For Wojtyla (1979):

The person, man as a person, is a “suppositum” that is a subject of existence and action. However, its existence (*esse*) is personal but not only individual like in a case of individual nature. Following this, operate-understood as a whole dynamism of man including actions and occurrences which obtain in him-is also personal.

Wojtyla stressed that to be a person is something more than to be individual nature. The former then stands for something that goes beyond the meaning of the individual of humankind. For Wojtyla (1979):

The term “person” has been coined to signify that a man cannot be wholly contained within a concept of “individual member of the species”; but that there is something more to him, a particular richness and perfection in the manner of his being, which can only be brought out by the use of the word “person.”

According to Roberto and Antonio (2015), “a human living on earth consists of two parts, soul and body”. The soul is an essential part of the human. It is the part to which the mental life of humans pertains. It is the soul which thinks and feels and chooses. Soul and body interact. Bodily states often cause soul states, and soul states often cause bodily states. Scheler's theory of the person may sound strange to those who come from classical anthropology in which the person is commonly defined as a substantial unity of entities. For Scheler (1973), 'to be a person is not the same as to have a soul or even to have selfhood'. Here, everything is different. Scheler presents us with a stratified understanding of human nature: the concept of the person involves maturity and complete powers of judging and choosing. For him, the person is not a substance in this kind of term. He wants to criticize, in the first place, the traditional conception of the person as a mere substance. As persons, we must understand that we have access to the world of values (values-essences) not only using intellectual capacity but by our affective and emotive propensities, and that is something special. Persons are unique entities; we cannot reduce the person to an instance of a reason which is universal. The person is not only a matter of will or reason but also of heart. In a very particular way, Max

Scheler (1973) defines the person by saying:

The person is the concrete and essential unity of being of acts of different essences which in itself precedes all essential act differences (especially the difference between inner and outer perception, inner and outer willing, inner and outer feeling, loving and hating.). The being of the person is therefore the foundation of all essentially different acts. But all this depends on a correct understanding of the relation which we call foundation.

A lot of literature has been devoted to the nature of the human person. Suffice it to note that when we talk about the person, we are seeing him primarily as a biological being who possesses, among other things, a rational, social, moral, and metaphysical nature. According to Andorno (2009), “a person qua person is first identified by his biological nature which he shares with other animals”. The biological nature of the human person enables him to grow, feed, mate, reproduce, and die. Man's biological nature makes him susceptible to the laws of nature. Human beings are made up of empirical and non-empirical phenomena. While the empirical dimension of the human person can be researched by the sciences (e.g., biology, psychology, sociology), the non-empirical dimension cannot be described and explained in objectifying scientific terms.

Human Person as a Social and Political Being

The human person would not be called a moral agent if he were completely a-social and alone. We will fully agree with Aristotle that man by nature is a social and political being. By this, he means that man is intended by nature to live in a social and political society. Nature intends man to live in a society is evident from man's gift of speech; it is only in a society that the gift of speech has any meaning and any use. Hence it shows that nature intended man to live in a society. It is impossible for man not to live in a society. No man can say he does not need to live in a society.

The idea behind the value of the human person implies that he is by nature a social being and therefore, needs to live in the community with others. Social living is necessary for normal human development. For Wojtyla (1979), within the community, we find the human being with all his dynamism, as one of its members. These are different terms and expressions to denote this membership, suited to the different kinds of relationships within the community or group. The human person, always

already in a web of relationships, cannot achieve self-awareness and proper self-possession without the help of interaction with others. Thus, intersubjectivity belongs to the ontological structure of the person, who is intrinsically ordered to self-communication with others. The issue is not that we relate to others, but how we relate to others. The definition of man as a social being is primarily concerning his obligation and responsibility towards his social milieu. An individual incorporates his uniqueness and identity which are unfolded in the community; it is the community that defines who man is and what the human person can be in the realization of his ideals.

According to Ejiogu Amaku (2009), “the emphasis of the community as the basis for the realization of self can be viewed from the aspect of cooperation and achievement which makes an individual a universal whole in the society”. The concept of the human person cannot be isolated from the community. It is only about the community that the identity of the individual is perceptible. For Wojtyla (1979), the “I” is constituted by the Thou from an “I-You” relationship, the person begins to enter into a “we” relationship. From the interpersonal dimension of the community, it enters into a social dimension. The social dimension of a community is expressed in the pronoun “we”. The “I-You” relationship which describes persons standing apart from each other now becomes a relationship where in the parties involved are united as a group. The We relationship not only allows a person to form a new kind of relationship with others but he is also able to experience his humanity as well as the humanity of others more fully. Wojtyla (1979) explains the meaning of social community through the analysis of the *We* relationship. In his view, a We is many Is or selves. Wojtyla is of the opinion that community is particularly compatible with the person as a subject, that is, with the fact each human being is an I or thou, and not merely a human being. He thinks that if we are many human beings, who in some sense exist and act together, then these activities along with the existence of those many Is, are related to a single value, which merits the name “common good”.

In his book, *Philosophy, in the Existentialist Tradition*, Karl Jasper (1971) insists that philosophy must be relevant to the life of the human person in the concrete circumstances of his existential situation. For Jasper (1971), 'the man who loves mankind does not love at all, but one who loves a particular human being does' For Jasper, Existence as it pertains to Being is called Encompassing. It is the form of our awareness of being that

underlies all our scientific and common-sense knowledge and which is given expression in the myths and rituals of religion. This awareness is not that of an object, but a reflection of the subjective situation of being. Jaspers' anthropological framework consists of a dual conception of the human person. Human beings are made up of empirical and non-empirical phenomena.

Jaspers (1971) emphasized the social aspect of the human person where he believed that the uniqueness of one individual presupposes the uniqueness of the other individual. This can also be seen in individual freedom and freedom of others, individual experience as well as the experience of others. For Jasper (1971):

Against myself-will, against the accident of my empirical existence, I experience myself in communication. I am never sure of being myself than at times of total readiness for others when I come to myself, because the other too comes to himself in our revealing struggle.

The human person can never become himself in isolation, for freedom does not mean self-sufficiency. There is no isolated freedom.

Marcel (1949) speaks of “the indubitable character of existence” and its non-reducibility. His existentialist ontology provides a realistic stance that affirms the dignity and unity of the person. His dramatic works emphasize the first person, and the intertwining of the life experiences of persons in his plays reveals his theme of intersubjectivity. Marcel (1949) proposes a theory of the interrelatedness of individuals, one to another, in his thesis on intersubjectivity. Marcel states that “- territory (the territory of intersubjectivity) is more original in an experience than an I-territory”. In other words, our experience reveals that we constitute ourselves as interiority only as we recognize the reality of the other. The 'we' is described as the more basic reality in Marcel's vision of self-arising within the sea of intersubjectivity, like an island in the sea. Intersubjectivity is the background or horizon against which the 'I' and the 'thou' stand out, and it is, therefore, the condition for the possibility of conversation ... community ... communion. “I am constituted by my relations with others. It is the 'we' which creates the 'I'...Intersubjective acts found the subject”.

Marcel's intersubjective thesis is grounded on his existentialist philosophy which refutes the idealistic notion of the person as a mental representation, or a construct of the mind with its resultant outcome of making

interpersonal dialogue and communion impossible.

According to Nusser Karl-Heinz (2008), “the concept of the human person as a social being implies that no human being has power over the life of another; to give and to take it”. Hence the culture that human life is indispensable and absolute and must, therefore, be accorded its due respect. Whatever happens to the human person happens to the society he belongs to, and whatever happens to society happens to man as well. Political life must not be understood organically but in terms of active participation, whereby the preservation of transcendence is intrinsically united with the formation of positive relationships with others for the sake of bringing about the common good. This relationship to the other as a neighbor, another “I,” forms the essential communal bond whereby individuals affirm and accept one another in the truth with an acute sense of belonging that fosters greater intimacy and cooperation.

At this point, I will like to say that the human person is socially situated, defined, and shaped in a relational context where he must achieve humaneness through interaction with another particular individual. No one can be fully human without playing roles in the interaction with one's fellow person. It can be concluded that the way one comes to understand what it means to be human or to be humane, is through one's interaction with other people, and through the allied virtue of reciprocity or empathy, so that you understand yourself by what you understand of others, and you understands and treat them by what you understand of yourself. The human person exists in a social context. They learn from one another, they interact with one another.

Impact of Contemporary Ideologies (Secular Humanism) on Modern Society

With the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, there has been the persistent rise of several ideologies in our society. These ideologies can be said to be a revolution against religion, with the asserting of science as the new paradigm for judging all here is about the human person. Taking a panoramic view of the current situation of the human person, the dignity that characterizes the human person is far threatened by the presence of these ideologies. The misunderstanding that rends our societies about the human person and its dignity, proceeding from these perverse contemporary ideologies may be attributed amongst other factors, to the deformity in the formation of the human person. It is the case that when

there is a proper formation of the human person, there is also a corresponding appreciation of human life, and by extension, there is great regard for the dignity of the human person since man is a composite of both corporeal and spiritual realities.

Secular Humanism is précised on the view that ultimate truth can be known through reason alone without relying on faith or divine revelation and that all truth about God and his divine revelation is questionable. Secular Humanism is sometimes referred to as Humanism with capital letter H and no qualifying adjective to distinguish it from other forms of Humanism. The emphasis of Secular Humanism is on better and improved socio-economic and political conditions, with the belief that man does not need any spiritual or supernatural powers for assistance.

In the Renaissance of the 14th to the 17th centuries, there was a renewed emphasis on man which opens up the way for the modern tenets of Secular Humanism. This renewal during that era did not exclude God as man's creator, but it did focus attention away from him. The enlightenment of the 18th century, coupled with the development of modern science, gave rise to decisions that deemphasized God and affirmed belief in God who was not mounted in the affairs of men. In the 17th century, naturalism became the order of the day and God was jettisoned completely. With the publication of Charles Darwin's book "On the Origin of Species" in 1859, the assertion became that there was no need to even contemplate God since naturalistic science has declared that humanistic origin was completely natural. The efforts of scientists and philosophers and liberal theologians in the 20th century were to promote the Humanist alternative to faith based-on worldviews. These early organizers classified Humanism as a non-theistic religion that would fulfill the human need for an ordered ethical/philosophical system to guide people's lives. It provided a type of "spirituality" without the supernatural. The effects of this secular humanism are the loss of the sense of the sacred and a corresponding rise of the immoralities of what could be defined as the fun of the modern world which is an offshoot of materialism, modern science, and technology. According to Odah Mark (2013), the culture is characterized by sexual promiscuity, and open commercial prostitution in the stead of decency. It is important to state that Odah Mark justified this claim by saying in contemporary society, sexual deviation and permissiveness are the order of the day. Secularism approves of all sexual activities between two

consenting adults thereby justifying sexual perversions like fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, and gay marriage.

One of the dangers of secular humanism according to Ogunmodede Francis (2007) to contemporary man and society is the culture of death which it has helped to promote. The justifications of euthanasia, abortion, suicide, etc are evident testimonies in this regard. This is the direct consequence of the exclusion of God from human affairs. It must be stated that government policies even in some supposed Christian countries of the world are formulated and rooted upon this assertion which completely removes God from the dealing of man and society. Therefore, anti-life legislation has been passed to legalize abortion, euthanasia, and suicide. The culture of death is a product of the loss of the sense of man which is direct fallout from the loss of the sense of God and the sacred. A veritable structure of sin which secularism promote gives birth to a veritable culture of death and conspiracy against life. On another note, secularism has given impetus to moral laxity. Its emphasis on man-centered morality and the attempt to extricate God from morality promote ethical pluralism, relativism, and individualism. With the removal of an ultimate basis for truth and goodness, secularism leaves us with a subjective basis of ethics and morality.

We must state that a material conception of the world and the human person promote the culture of crass materialism in the world today where the emphasis is on the gratification of material needs at the expense of the spiritual. That is why the crude acquisition of wealth, corruption, greed, and get-rich-quick syndromes define the attitude of life today. These trends of excessive materialism are manifested everywhere today. As a prevailing philosophy that is achieved on secularism, pragmatism defines attitude in almost every sphere of human life as the relevance of a thing is pinned down to the material prosperity that it can guarantee.

Preserving Human Person and Human Dignity in the Face of Contemporary Ideologies

Today in the world, there is so much violence, every day we hear about killings, kidnappings, rapes, abortion, terrorist attacks, hunger, wars, and many other acts of violence. It is ironic that, while the human person is the very victim of this violence, it is also the human person who is the perpetrator of such violence; man is simultaneously the victim and the culprit. The issue of justice, human rights, and dignity are always relevant

to the wider civil society. This is because any discussion on the human person today focuses centrally on either the need to accord human being the dignity and rights due to them as persons. Human dignity is the foundational concept of the global human rights regime, the ultimate value that gives coherence to human rights.

The concept of human dignity has been so misused by many contemporary ideologies such as changing the original idea about the nature of human life and dignity.

Science and technology, especially in the medical field, have succeeded in providing many answers to the numerous problems confronting humanity. In the medical field, scientists have been able to curb the many diseases threatening the continued substance of the human person. With medical aid, life could even be prolonged; but this has also had its negative implications and raises debilitating questions as to the dignity of the human person and as to when life actively begins. While we commend science for its monumental feat in improving life, we cannot close our eyes to the many dangers contained in its many experiments on the human person for whatever reason.

We shall be arguing for the dignity of human life and dignity and the need to protect life in every stage of its existence until death. Much emphasis shall be laid on abortion, one of the commonest types of murder we experience today. Abortion according to *Oxford Dictionary* is the deliberate ending of pregnancy at the early stage.

John Paul II (1995) (who is also known as Karol Wojtyla) at the beginning of his Encyclical “*Evangelium Vitae*” discusses the unparalleled worth of the human person. Wojtyla (1979) opined:

Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person such as mutilation, torments, inflicted on body or mind, attempt to coerce the will itself, whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment,... they poison human society, and they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the creator.

Karol Wojtyla (1979) acknowledged that new threats have emerged, such as poverty, hunger, abortion, genocide, and euthanasia. He argues that these new threats diminish human dignity and life. Wojtyla's opposing to

what is threatening human dignity in terms of humanism, which is a culture of life- forming a commitment to the inviolable mystery of the person. Such commitment includes manifold tasks: it recognizes what is human in every culture, fosters human freedom, regards the human body as something priceless, and respects human rights in every specific situation.

Karol Wojtyla (1995) insisting that we must call things by either proper name, identifies abortion as the murder of innocent and defenseless human beings .he goes on to say:

Today there exists a great multitude of weak and defenseless human beings, unborn children in particular, whose fundamental right to life is being trampled upon. Just as a century ago, it was the working classes that were oppressed in their fundamental rights, and the church very courageously came to their defense by proclaiming the sacrosanct rights of the worker as a person, so now, when another category of person s being oppressed in the fundamental right to life, the church feels in duty bound to speak out with the same courage on behalf of these who have no voice.

Fidelis Egbunu (2002) wrote that those killed during the 1st and 2nd world war especially, over six million Jews killed at the Nazi camp put together and even those exterminated through terrorist attacks, are only a minute fraction of the silent holocaust of the unborn babies going on in our time. The unborn has been referred to as clothed blood, tissue, and a bunch of cells, a tumor, a lump, or just a thing. No wonder then that fetuses are used in cosmetics laboratories as ingredients for beauty products. Pro-abortionists attribute the necessity of abortion to “unplanned circumstances”. For some, it is family planning, while others claim a right to private property. Yet others see it as a result of a defect of the child. For a large group, it is a result of the mental trauma of rape or incest since carrying a pregnancy of some sort would be unbearable. In all these seemingly persuasive reasons, is embedded selfishness and pleasure, neglecting to consider the right of the blameless (no fault of the child), unique, and sacredness of the unborn to live. We think we need a moral evaluation, based on the knowledge of the human person as a whole, to our claims of rationality no matter the situation we find ourselves in; this is because we are often beclouded by extreme emotions and neglect what we think is a burden to us.

Another process by which human life is unjustly destroyed is Embryonic Stem Cell Research (ESCR), which is also backed by the pro-choice

movement. ESCR involves the use of human embryos for research purposes in such a way that the embryo is destroyed and prevented from reaching maturity. The argument posed by those that are pro-choice is that the embryo cannot be considered a form of life; therefore, it lacks any moral status. Their arguments are premised on the fact that an organism can only be considered to have a right to life when such an organism possesses the capacity for rationality, capacity for moral agency, social relationships, and the like. These sets of functionalities constitute a necessary or sufficient condition for an organism to be considered as having a life and subsequently moral status.

Although Nigeria is a religious state, she is not excluded from the scourges of these perverse contemporary ideologies. The Nigerian society has become so decadent in our time, that one is forced to ask the question of whether the nation is moving forward or backward in terms of values for him, life, rights, and dignity. It seems that the fundamental human rights in Nigeria only belong to a selected few, some chosen citizens or groups of persons who enjoy such privileges. It is important to state that every human being has a right and dignity that must be protected and respected. Nigeria like other nations has laws and constitutions that protect the rights of the individual. But the question is whether such laws and constitutions are recognized and treated with respect. Other important questions are: why is respect for the human person fundamental in government? Put differently. Why must any government respect the rights and freedom of the citizens since the former has the overwhelming power to coerce the citizens if they disobey its orders? What is the situation of human beings in political societies today? And, more importantly, what should be people's reaction in the face of this situation?

Paragraph 33, section of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is dedicated to individual rights to life. It states thus:

Every person has a right to life, and no one shall be deprived intentionally of his life, save in execution of the sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offense of which he has been found guilty in Nigeria

There is a serious concern as regards the protection of the life of the individual in Nigeria at the moment. The threat to human life is indeed as old as humanity itself, but the rate at which sacred human life is abused is alarming. What is the state of things as regards respect for the dignity and rights of persons in the civil society in our country today? We have seen in

the past, and continue to witness today, fragrant acts of violation of human dignity, and rights of persons by highly placed agents of various tiers of government in our country Nigeria today. It is unimaginable that a human being could be set ablaze in her own house by thugs who are paid some peanuts by some political leaders. It is a true story that took place in Kogi State after the governorship election that took place on 16th November 2019. News carried it on that fateful day that a woman leader of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Kogi State, was burnt to death in her home at Ochadamu in Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State on Monday, November 18, 2019, by suspected thugs. This is just one of the incidences of senseless killings. It is quite mind-bugging to see how human life is subjected to torture, humiliation, and eventually death in Nigeria.

The Constitution has made provision for the right to remain silent in the face of confrontation by kidnappers. How many persons enjoy rights and dignity in Nigeria? There are several cases of violation of human dignity and rights in Nigeria. Among such cases are: the Train attack on the Abuja-Kaduna rail line on March 28, 2022, Owo attack (St. Francis Catholic Church) on June 5, 2022, where over 40 persons were killed and over 80 injured. Kuje Prison attack on July 5, 2022, just one month after the Owo attack was carried out. The most recent is the Appeal Court judgment that stated the release of IPOB leader Nnamdi Kanu on October 13, 2022. These are some of the known and reported instances. What about the unknown and unreported ones? Although the government proclaims in the media to be doing something about such situations, the efforts, one must say, are not enough. Much still needs to be done to prevent people from being subjected to such inhuman acts. The government must always be vigilant about such acts of human wickedness against fellow citizens. Although in contemporary society, it is very difficult if not impossible for people to reassume their authority when a government betrays the trust of the people, the fundamental message of the social contract theory is that society is nothing more than a collective term for rational individuals who have come together under whatever association to see to the attainment of objective congruent to their interests.

What is the state of things as regards respect for the dignity and right of persons in the civil society in our country Nigeria today? We must also acknowledge that the records of both the federal government and various state government and their agents in the area of respect for human dignity and the rights of the individual in our society are not altogether

unblemished. We have seen in the past, and continue to witness today, fragrant acts of violation of human dignity and rights of persons by highly placed agents of various tiers of government in Nigeria today.

Summary and Conclusion

Thus far, we have preoccupied ourselves with the concept of human dignity. We have above a call to authentic personalism that emphasizes rightly on the true authentic nature of the human person as a possessor of immutable dignity and inviolable rights that should be respected and defended at all times and places. All structures and superstructures should help to guarantee this. We, both as individuals and as a society, should never be comfortable with the wrong status quo. We must learn to treasure people in themselves for what they are- persons, rather than for what they have. Even the philosopher has a role to play in making sure that the dignity of the human person is restored. The philosopher should be able to bridge the dichotomy between thought and praxis, between philosophizing and genuine interrogation of the philosopher's worldview and immediate environment. Our Nigerian philosophers should be able to concretely address contemporary issues of our nation Nigeria as they concern human life, human right, and human dignity. Philosopher should place their knowledge gained and sustained by human reason at the service of humanity.

Man has dignity because he is a person. Human dignity is rooted in man's personhood; the dignity of man is based on his spiritual and material essence. Human dignity is, therefore, founded on the spirituality and the physicality of the human essence as the principle of actuality. Human dignity is the expression of the high degree of beingness, actuality, and perfection that the human essence possesses. The human person and their dignity must not be suppressed. Any form of suppression and stifling of the dignity of the human person implies an outright disrespect for the human person. The various ideologies found in our societies today, that are inimical to the nature of the human person can be said to result from the lack of the holistic formation of the human person. Hence a holistic formation that caters to both the spiritual and material needs of the human person would earnestly bring about the appreciation of human life and respect for the dignity of the human person. in this case, the human person is seen not as an instrument or tool to be used, or conceived as means to achieving all other ends; but as an end in itself.

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