

RETHINKING HUMAN NATURE IN LINE WITH AFRICAN VALUE OF COMPLEMENTARITY: TOWARDS THE RATIONALIZATION OF THE SACRED IN LIEU OF THE DE-RADICALIZATION OF RELIGIOUSLY MOTIVATED PERSONS FOR MORE VERITABLE SOCIETIES

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ABSTRACT

Man is essentially a rational animal. It is in his rationality that he has created ordered culture that has enhanced living with others in reasonable amity and harmonious co-existence. In everything that man does, he has tried to ensure that co-ordination, equity, orderliness etc are ensured. Religion is one of these cultural institutions by man which sees a wholly other as the essence of the relationship. This wholly other is understandable in varied perspectives namely infinite goodness, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence etc for the enhancement of such relationship. This entails that there is a supernatural being that created or creates all that there is in reality but is not created. However, religion becomes obscure and esoteric when there is no clear channel of relationship between the sacred and the mundane. Unlike science where a molecule of oxygen is same everywhere in the world, there are no such universalizable essence once it comes to religion. This has given rise to the claim that man should give up his rationality to faith as the guiding principle of any religious activity. The consequence of this is that lots of irrationalities have been harboured under the guise of religion including fundamentalism. Religious fundamentalism has become the bane of our modern day societies such that no serious thinking person should blink his eyes without trying a solution to this malaise of our civilization. This paper argues that the source of these crises is in the misapplication of religion to human society. Accordingly, employing the method of philosophical analysis, it argues that unless there is a rationalization of the sacred there may never be peace with humanity. This stems from the view that religious actors tendentiously manipulate religion to serve their whims and caprices allegedly doing the work of the divine. But at the base of their actions is a mixture of human nature and values. In order to stem the tide of fundamentalism, this paper avers that the world ought to borrow what the author calls pragmatic religious value of the African Traditional Religion. This will derive from the African principle of complementarity.

Keywords: *Human Nature; African Values; The Sacred; Complementarity; Religion*

Introduction

Mankind's true disposition revolves around the historicity of his being. This entails the dialectical and integrative intercourse of his essence with his environment. But this dialogic interplay has manifested itself in various modes with varying interpretations of his nature. While some see nature both in its substantial or participial forms as hidden, and not unweilable, others see it as hidden but veillable. The former belongs to the mode of thought attributed to Heraclitus: "Nature loves to hide". If nature loves to hide, what is the mode of human nature? In essence, is man's essence fixed and hence absolute? Or is his nature in constant unfolding?

The need to properly understand the nature of man can never be overemphasized bearing in mind the challenges of our time. Philosophers over the years have engaged themselves in actually trying to unveil the nature of man. This has manifested in trying to make out meaning on the relationship between human ideas, interests and human actions. These have emanated from such historicist interaction between ones "fixed" and "evolving" nature. Over the years, philosophers have tried to understand man's being in order to unravel in a predictive manner his behavioral motivations: this has not been fully achieved. The challenges of our time have become more renewed and pronounced in religious fundamentalism and the need for de-radicalization of fundamentalists.¹ What is of prominent relief here is that man's essence or nature is existentially not fixed but evolving; thus any view forbidding it is not doing humankind any favour.

We have set out for our self at the beginning of this paper the task of creating a new orientation that should underpin human nature in order to change the inherent social (dis) order. This captures a new conception of human nature where man is presented as a process reality with fixed but yet evolving essence. This new understanding of human nature in complementary parlance is unique to Africa and sees reality as a paradox of harmony of opposites where opposites are appreciated as but moments in the self-evolving time of beings in an ultimate unifying foundation of meaning. This does not entail the presentation of opposites in the Hegelian sense where the opposition can never be resolved in a harmonious whole. What implications have these for man in the society?

Throughout his existence on this earth, man's existence has reflected the historicity of events around his being. Indeed, he has always reacted to the exigencies of his time. The signing of the Magna Carter, the French Revolution, the Habeas Corpus Act, revolt against colonialism etc were attempts at curtailing the excess of leaders and enthroneing equality, equity and a sense of humanism. However, it would be observed that our period is bedevilled by the "global paradox." This is expressed in various political and socio-economic manoeuvre geared towards the domination and subjugation of weak peoples of the world.

This has manifested in various forms as economic and political imperialism. It is a common history that this kind of situation does always elicit reactions on the part of those who understand themselves as the weak and oppressed peoples. In our time, the greatest challenge comes from Islamic fundamentalism and Zionism. The new theory of complementarity that spurs from creative evolution is intended to present human nature in

such a way that every being is in harmonious relationship with the other in a sort of “my survival depends on your survival: if you do not survive, I will not survive”. This is the spirit of complementary value where religions should see the other as moments in God's expression of his divine message to humanity. This will enhance our understanding that no religion is in a harmonious fullness without the other, but that each religion compliments the other. In this sense, even when scientism manifests as religion, it should see the need to have a supervening and reference authority in terms of our hollowness of being. It is in order to achieve this orientation in our social order, that this work finds its justification. It therefore rejects the idea that a “philosopher changes nothing except ideas”, on the ground that any philosophy that changes ideas without changing the social order is a failure. Philosophers should change the social order for better, this they have done in various ways. Mine here is to change our social order for the betterment of humanity by creating a creed of peace that arises from this new orientation in conceiving human nature. But first let us discuss the de-radicalization experience of religiously motivated persons in Nigeria.

Attempting an Understanding of Terrorism

Terrorism has existed for centuries now without any unanimous or univocally acceptable definition for the term. This limitation notwithstanding, it has not impeded the progressive efforts of made in addressing the attendant challenges, consequences, and impact of terrorism in human society. The American FBI made a distinction between International and Domestic terrorism by defining the former as 'violent criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups who are inspired by, or associated with designated foreign organizations or nations (state-sponsored) while the latter is defined as violent criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences such as those of a political, religious, social, racial, or environmental nature.²

From the two definitions above, terrorism and the use of violence by criminal elements is understandable per jurisdiction. In effect, what is categorized as crime in one country may not be codified in another. Again, this is made more serious by the lack of a globally acceptable criterion for proscribing group as terrorist organizations. However, we should note that groups proscribed by the United States have been treated as such at the international levels. Foreign terrorist organizations or groups are designated as such by the United States Secretary of State by the provisions of the 2019 Immigrations and National Act (INA), as amended.³

With this challenge of a lack of the univocal definition of terrorism at the fore, defining terrorism may seem to be applicable only to the United States of America. On its part, the European Union (EU) defines terrorism as terror acts committed to 'seriously intimidate a population, unduly compelling a government or international organization to perform or abstain from performing any act, seriously destabilizing or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic, or social structures of a country or international

organization.⁴ The EU definition appears to be more comprehensive than the earlier one as it includes attacks against the international community/organization.

All we have tried to do is to point out the difficulty of having a generally acceptable definition of terrorism; however, it is imperative to note some of the components of terrorism namely the deployment of violence, intimidation, and destruction that cuts across national borders. It is this challenge of a non-acceptable definition of terrorism, that spurred the UN Commissioner for Human Rights has urged the nations of the world to incorporate the key elements of terrorism as stipulated in the UN's Security Council Resolution 1566 (2004) in modeling the definition developed by the Special Rapporteur which emphasis that terrorism involves 'the intimidation or coercion of populations or government through the threat of perpetrate violence causing death, serious injury, or the taking of hostages.'⁵ Thus seen, the definition of 'terrorism' has turned to be discretionary thereby resulting in the varied interpretations and domestication of the counterterrorism laws notable in different regions of the globe.

The absence of a universal definition of terrorism for legal purposes has far-reaching implications. One of those is that different states may resort to politicizing the term by applying it as they deem convenient in their respective criminal jurisprudence which may lead to the violation of fundamental human rights of their citizens and even aliens.⁶ Secondly, the confusion may lead to ambiguity in the codification of crime as one of the principles of the law is clarity and certainty which ensures that criminal acts and their corresponding penalties are established and defined before the commission of the crime. Additionally, this has led to the inability of the laws on terrorism and the normative standards for countering terrorism to be harmonized at the national and regional levels.⁷

De-radicalization of Religiously Motivated persons and the Nigerian Experience

Religion can at times be a very positive force for social change and at other times it can metamorphose into radicalism to the level of that it leads to terrorism. Since 2009, the Nigerian state has become a pun in the hands of Boko Haram, ISWAP etc to the extent that it has overtaken security and peace discourses. This is because they have consistently over run the securities of both the North East and North West of Nigeria while its tributary of herdsmen has taken over the Middle-Belt and Southern part of the country. It is however, very unfortunate that there is apparently no success or little success in combatting these fundamentalist elements by the Nigerian security architecture. Following from this minimal success from years of counterinsurgency, the Nigerian government decided to adopt the strategy of both the soft and the military offensives approaches to enable it win the war against terrorism. The de-radicalization approach where repentant insurgents are reintegrated into the security architecture with the belief that they would be very effective in witting down terrorism and crass insecurity become a viable option. At this point certain issues arise; why is there politicization of the insecurity in Nigeria? Is the Nigerian de-radicalization program effective? Are there methodological issues when considered from operational balancing of the treatment meted to the victims of terrorism and the so called

repentant insurgents? This last question arises due mainly because one of the greatest challenges of the de-radicalization program in Nigeria is the apparent lack of just balance in the treatment given to repentant insurgents and ameliorating the conditions of their victims.

Following from the above, this section critically examines the prospects of Nigeria's de-radicalization program and its implications for the globe. As we have observed earlier, we make bold to assert that there must be efforts towards the rationalization of the religious value base that gives rise to radicalization and ipso terrorism in the first instance. It is our considered opinion that for the Nigerian government or any other government at that to achieve the desired ends, it must be sincere in setting up a well thought-out structure that can make for successful de-radicalization and reintegration of surrendered terrorists. This is because there is the serious concern raised about guaranteeing both the safety and trusts of victims of terrorism that are expected to co-exist with the supposed ex-members of the terrorist groups. It affirms that unless a rationalized educational approach aimed at rethinking human nature and the sacred is adopted in the de-radicalization programme, there will be no success as is being experienced where the purported repentant terrorists who are integrated into the security forces volunteer security information to the unrepentant ones thereby undermining efforts at combating terrorism and the de-radicalization efforts.

The Nigerian security asserts that the de-radicalization programs is aimed at peacefully disengaging individuals and groups from terrorism, by using non-military approaches like dialogue aimed at, amnesty, disarmament, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Several programmes as "Operation Safe Corridor" etc have been adopted to play key roles. The following key aspects of the de-radicalization Process could be examined:

Employing non-military tactics: security experts in Nigeria have after analysing the intractable difficulties of combatting insurgents shifted tactics from solely military offensive to address insurgency with non-military strategies, including dialogue, negotiation, amnesty, disarmament, rehabilitation, and reintegration. The belief is that it would enhance deep rooted de-radicalization of terrorists from the grassroots. Unfortunately, the lack of understanding of the root cause of terrorism as arising from religious motivations has hindered adequate success. We must rationalize certain religious values in order to stem insurgency.

Employing "Operation Safe Corridor": Operation Safe Corridor is a military de-radicalization effort particularly in the Northeast of Nigeria that focus on the rehabilitation and reintegration of repentant terrorists into society, with the aim of disarming, demobilizing, de-radicalizing, rehabilitating, and reintegrating them into normal societal lives after their terrorism bids.

Attempt at addressing the root causes of terrorism: the Nigerian state instituted certain reasons as the causes or the underlying factors that contribute to radicalization and terrorism, such as poverty, unemployment, and socio-political grievances. Unfortunately, these identified causes though part of it, are not the main reasons for insurgency; religion

has been deployed by politicians who want to keep ruling without responsibility. A typical example was how religiously motivated terrorism was used by America and its agents in Nigeria to oust the Dr Goodluck Jonathan's government in 2015. We are not jettisoning the vocational training and skills acquisition programs of the de-radicalization program but affirm that rethinking human nature and religious beliefs hold the ace for the de-radicalization of insurgents ultimately.

Deploying rehabilitation and reintegration schemes: the Nigerian de-radicalization programs employ therapeutic counselling, religious reorientation, and skills acquisition to help individuals disengage from extremism and reintegrate them into the society. Again, some of the terrorists have used the claim of repentance as decoy to spy the security architecture for the overall benefit of the terrorist structures thus necessitating the need for their delinking from the negative religious values that inspire their dastardly acts.

Getting Communities involved: the program of de-radicalization got some community organizations and social groups factored into de-radicalization efforts, with individuals seeking to participate providing their names to prevent infiltration by radicals. As good as this sounds, negative religiously motivated persons also infiltrated the scheme thereby betraying the positive intended efforts.

There are serious challenges and criticisms bedevilling the de-radicalization efforts in Nigeria. There is always the record of success with such efforts but the de-radicalization programs have shown minimal success. This arises from recidivism; reports are rife with of some rehabilitated individuals returning to terror groups. We see this as resulting from the structural weaknesses of the design and implementation of the program. The Nigerian government is expanding de-radicalization programs to the North West, which is facing a different challenge of banditry which some people have claimed, are driven by financial incentives rather than ideology. This has raised the questions revolving around the effectiveness of the approach *abinitio*.

CONCLUSION

We shall conclude this work by asserting that if the critical issues of tension in the sphere of the secular and sacred are reducible to human factors, it follows that there is the need to rationalize man's actions in these areas that were hitherto reserved for the divine.⁸ Man is essentially a rational being; the issues of the sacred have been alleged to be beyond reason but moderated by faith and belief in order to serve the self-seeking motives of man. But we have observed that the alleged sacred arena has been overtaken by human manipulations. This has been seen with the perforation of the hitherto claims of issues as the inerrancy of the revelation of sacred writings. It is therefore needful that we mediate the realm of the sacred with reason.

It is noteworthy that at this point we acknowledge the fact that several people have reacted against reason as the essence of man. This idea is very prevalent in post-modernist philosophy following Schopenhauer, Benjamin Constant, A. de. Tocqueville, Edmund Burke, Joseph de Maistre and the Romantic Movement. Accordingly, they critiqued

Western culture and the liberal views of man. However, of very important essence is the observation that all these criticism were not intended to destroy man's nature as free, rational and autonomous instead, it intends to keep man at alert against the excessive exertion of reason.

Let us now look at the rationalization of the sacred and how it can foster veritable secular relationships. It was Frantz Fanon who described man as a “metaphysical being of yes and no; yes to those things that conduce to his well-being and no to those that militate against his well-being”. What this implies is that man should reject those things that are against his existential perfection on earth, while he advances those that fulfil his destiny. The essence of divinity, for the *Igbo* (a tribe in Nigeria) is the betterment of their well-being through the exhibition of positive power and influence on its adherents. Any God that fails in this regards is jettisoned and its veneration and worship discarded. From the foregoing, it is obvious that the traditional *Igbo* accept that the ontological status of a God rests in it performing its function namely the maintenance of the well-being of man. Any God that fails to do same is 'killed', ie, is no longer worshipped. This is the principle of religious pragmatism that arises from the rationalization of the sacred. Thus we postulate that for the world to live peaceably, it has to enthrone the elements of this religious pragmatism of the *Igbo*. The role of education in line with the new paradigm above can never be over emphasized. Consequently, the nature of the de-radicalization training should revolve around this religious pragmatic approach of making those in training to understand that any religion that does not enhance human wellbeing should be jettisoned. The horrible experience of the de-radicalization exercise in Nigeria should guide others. This is where those that government claims are repentant and therefore in need of de-radicalization only end up to continue their fundamentalism when they join the Armed Forces and Paramilitary bodies by releasing security information to their erstwhile members.

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