AFRICAN PROBLEMS AND ACHIEVEMENTS THROUGH THE NIGERIAN LENS

NIGERIA'S PROBLEM OF HUMAN NATURE AND THE QUEST FOR RECIPROCITY AND THE COMMON GOOD AS DEVELOPMENTAL VALUES: A PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION

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Nigeria faces a problem of human nature or agency, which is easily seen in the inability of human beings as social members, to live together for a common purpose. This inability to sustain social order threatens Nigeria's core institutions, principles and values for human and national development. This shortfall above has traditional and modern dimensions. The entrenched authoritarianism and anachronism of the pre-colonial and colonial African societies have combined with the ethno-religiously motivated postcolonial nation-state to create a crisis of unfinished nation-state project. This conundrum or convolution is partly traced to a full blooded egoism in African human nature, which triggers a deficit in the national and human security and paves the way for corruption, terrorism, violent conflicts, inefficiency, intolerance and lack of procedural and social justice in the society. Our finding is that there is an urgent task of defining and promoting key human values for development. Central among these are the pursuit of the common good and reciprocity as drivers of development and security in this modern age. This is necessary so that Nigeria can join other progressive countries in search for human dignity and well-being for its citizens at the national and international level.

Keywords: human nature, security, common good, reciprocity, development, values, ethnicity

Introduction

Society is necessary to provide a certain level of security for a human being. From history we also know that human associations have been the core sources of security during crises or problems. For example, nowadays one observes the crisis of women's security as seen in the inequitable valuation of rewards and duties in the family. There exists a problem of tyranny and man's inhumanity to man, as seen in the internal operations of human actions in a state or society. There is a considerable social insecurity generated by human intercultural conflicts among human associations at the global level. There is

a human factor affecting the search for security in a society. This is triggered by what Grayling (2003: 131) says is the 'murderous grip of humanity's various immemorial belief systems, intolerance, bigotry, zealotry and hatred'. All these problems can be predicated upon the workings of human nature and human actions as clearly motivated by psychological, cultural or economic factors, among others.

The Conceptual Framework of Security and Human Nature

There seems to be a tendency to overlook a critical aspect of human existence in the security and nation building factor – the human nature. It is linked to the problem of an individual and society in philosophy. Here we share Berry's view (1986: xiii) who insists that 'social and political organization has to accommodate itself to the human nature and not vice versa.' In other words, human nature is the major or essential factor in the quest for security of human existence. Then the crucial question here is: what is human nature? This is a conceptual question with far reaching empirical consequences. Let us have a simplification and clarification of the concept of human nature. Human nature has to do with certain physical and non-physical elements. According to Dewey (1974a & 1974b) human nature can be defined by the innate needs of human beings. Dewey (1974a: 16) says that

> I do not think it can be shown that the innate needs of men have changed since man became man or that there is any evidence that they will change as long as man is on the earth. Needs for food and drink and for moving about, the need for bringing one's power to bear upon surrounding conditions, the need for some sort of aesthetic expression and satisfaction, are so much part of our being.

Furthermore, Dewey (1974b: 118) points out that 'pugnacity and fear are native elements of human nature. But so are pity and sympathy.' The quest for security and the context of human nature is tied to what Mill (1962) refers to as the natural sentiment of justice, which is defined by the interplay of the ideas of punishment, self-defense and sympathy. What is this idea and how is it connected with the conceptual clarification of the human nature for security? Mill (1962: 306) states that

> two essential ingredients in the sentiment of justice are, the desire to punish a person who has done harm, and the knowledge or belief that there is some definite individual or individuals to whom harm has been done. The desire to punish … is a spontaneous outgrowth from two sentiments, both in the highest degree natural, and which either are or resemble instincts; the impulse of self-defense, and the feeling of sympathy.

Furthermore, Mill (1962: 307) argues that

> a human being is capable of apprehending a community of interest between himself and the human society of which he forms a part such that any conduct which threatens the security of the society generally is threatening to his own and calls forth his instinct of self-defense.

From the above analysis, there emerges a natural dimension of security as embodied in human nature and its operations. These natural human feelings and instincts are in their turn constrained by some other natural factors. According to McShea (1979: 389)

> men need what other animals do not, a method for the restoration of the functionality of feelings. Their freedom to imagine all possible things cannot, consistently with survival, entail enslavement to the necessity of action on the basis of an emotional reaction to each imagination.

The analysis of human nature takes a different dimension when an attempt is made to separate the individual aspect from the universal aspect as we see when Bacon (1972) sets the pedestals of the operations of human nature at two distinct but important levels. He does this through the theory of idols. According to Bacon (1972: 92) human nature is captured by the idols.

> The idols of the Tribe have their foundation in human nature itself, and in the tribe or race of men. The idols of the Cave are the idols of the individual man. For everyone (besides the errors common to human nature in general) has a cave or den of his own which refracts or discolors the light of nature; owing to his own proper and peculiar nature.

The individual and the universal aspects of human nature make sense when we situate the human nature socially; when human beings live together for a common purpose. Human nature and its significance for security make further sense only in the context of human social nature. According to Mackenzie (1963: 35) 'human association, societies are first formed for the sake of life; though it is for the sake of good life that they are subsequently maintained. The care of the young, the preservation of food and drink, the provision of adequate shelter and protection would suffice to account for the existence of human societies.' Let us examine some pitfalls of the African human nature.

Supernaturalism, Authoritarianism and Anachronism versus the Formation of Human Nature

Some African philosophers have identified certain gaps and concerns arising from our human nature or our inherited way of thinking and acting as Africans. We can identify some traits in human nature from the Africans' traditional past. One of these traits is the ability of human nature to allow for procedural and social justice within the human society. Does human nature incline itself naturally to respecting others and treating others justly and fairly? Some of these traits, queries and their consequences have been carried over into the modern era. The basic challenges, human nature challenges, and justice concerns facing most traditional societies in Africa have endured in the present day. Kwasi Wiredu emphasized that

> the three evils currently tormenting most if not all African cultures and nationalities are authoritarianism, permanent control of all aspects of life, politics included that ensues in people doing things against their will, anachronism, systems or principles outliving their suitability and utility,

supernaturalism, the tendency to establish supernatural foundations for a natural code of conduct (Wiredu in Kaphawagani 1998: 86).

There is also communalism.

One of the progressive philosophers has shed light on human nature by revealing aspects of his tribal and family history. As Appiah (1992: 181–192) tells us in his auto-biographical chapter 'In My Father's House' in his book of the very same title, the human nature is essentially what it is, with his own father's blood sister, a wife of the king of the Ashanti people disagreeing physically with her own brother, nieces and nephews, over material things such as land, using magical realism and physical terror to suppress opposition, as well as disrespecting the dead by truncating the process of where and when Anthony Appiah's father would be buried. Almost all Africans can tell the stories of cruelty, indignity, revolt against injustice and oppression such as this in their different corners of the continent. Some other people's stories of insecurity and dehumanization on the African continent are even worse than Appiah's description. The truth is that injustice is real, reprehensible and ever present with us in this African world. It is also present in other parts of the world at large. Specifically with respect to Africa, injustice, inequity, lack of fair play, incivility to others, disobedience to the rule of law and the denial of others' freedom by power, can come surprisingly from those closest to us, people we ought to look up to but who eventually reveal to us the banality of humanity and mortality as mere vanity.

There are other elements which impact the human nature in traditional Africa. Two of these elements are authoritarianism and communalism. Authoritarianism must be understood broadly in terms of concrete manifestations of hegemonic power that certified dominance and subjugation either by singular monarchy, elitist oligarchy or a messianic theocracy. Seen in either of these ways, there is a limitation of traditional culture and its capacity for self-definition, assertion of independence, and the exercise of creative intelligence as seen in its authoritarian orientation manifested in the demand and legitimating of unquestioning obedience by people to the authorities of elders. Because traditional society was essentially authoritatively communitarian, not much room could be made for deviant ideas or social practices. This point is significant, given the serious communal religious preoccupations with strengthening the moral-cultural bonds for collective survival in a physically and psychologically hostile environment. Such a situation and the desperate circumstances surrounding it ensured that little importance, if any, was placed on 'intellectual qualities such as curiosity or independence of thought' (Oladipo 1996: 47). The imperative of community survival, the real life threatening consequences of any putative social deviance and the near impossibility of eliciting specific and subordinate justice claims from the restrictive collectivistic countenance, made the negotiation of non-ontological justice a mirage.

A tendency to lope sided or preferential justice bred an alternate form of authoritarianism in social control and made the possibility of social change rather distant. Authoritarian justice, understood as subordination to hegemony, at best served to maintain order in the society at the cost of respect for individuality and openness to change and progress. The problem of justice in traditional Africa was also defined in terms of the problem of representation and responsiveness. Authoritarianism was the major factor

that generated the crisis of representation, understood as how power could be used to serve the interests of all or the needy members of society. In so far as the authoritarian perspective in a dispute or issue was taken as the dominant and representative decree, it became clear that the singular ethical or nominal opinion of a person or faction in the dispute or under the ordinance of the authoritarian patriarch was likely to be overruled or disregarded. The point is simple, in an environment such as this, the possibilities of dissent were quite remote and far between.

There was also the problem of justice via supernaturalism defined as 'the recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control over his destiny' (Sogolo 1993: 57). Put simply the question is 'how, in the explanation of observable events, disembodied or non-extended entities (spirits, witches, ghost, gods, *etc.*, existing beyond the confines of space) can possibly be invoked as causes?' (Sogolo 1998: 177). The ancestral ontological configuration of the traditional African societies made this approach to justice inevitable. It must be restated that 'the majority of Africans believe that God punishes in this life' (Mbiti 1969: 210). Also, metaphysically operative principles such as oath taking, curses are also instruments for the pursuit of justice in traditional Africa. Oath taking is a form of ritual treaty designed to ensure transparency in dealings. Whatever else this procedure of justice signified, 'it was a means of establishing truth and guilt and discouraging other evils in the community' (Nwala 1985: 58–59). Olisa (1989) supports this point about the metaphysical and physical in the justice machinery. He insists that in the attainment of justice in traditional systems there is the full participation of the deities and the appropriation of fetishism, magic and rituals (Olisa 1989: 238). Other devices that were employed in the pursuit of justice in traditional Africa include 'divination through the oracle, the influence of the supernatural and secret societies' (Olaoba 1997: 27). Such dispositions to life ensured that a more systematic philosophy of justice could hardly emerge from Africa owing to the critical shortfalls of these qualities. It is clear then that the traditional African notion of justice differed from the Western vision in the emphasis on a dual temporal-transcendental approach that retained intensely immanent propensities.

In essence therefore, the traditionalist African notion of justice fails to offer a viable developmental trajectory because it is defeated by supernaturalism that ensures the rise of a philosophy of justice, based, if it must be put harshly, on a network of hierarchical collusion, social conspiracy and utter surrender to anachronism. Trenchant supernaturalism places and legitimates all quests for justice at the altar of the divine, and denies the individuals' ability to seek their own redress by human generated physical instrumentalities. The problem, therefore, is that supernaturalism essentially ensures a kind of transcendentalism that in turn occasions esotericism. These features ensure inimical closure of the epistemic, methodological and moral spaces of the traditional African practices of justice. This is easy, because the supernaturalistic countenance of the traditional African society was further based on a gerontocratic notion of justice that made access to fair treatment, inclusion, rights and privileges, a matter of chronological or physical superiority in age. Thus evidence of this is seen in the point that 'each community or society has its form of restitution and punishment. It is generally the elders who deal with disputes and breaches. Traditional chiefs have the duty of keeping law and order, and executing justice' (Mbiti 1969: 211).

In the context of traditional Africa, this endemic inability to rebel, revolt or reform and thence, to achieve endogenous transformation or change in the vital realm of values is called anachronism. Anachronism is the inability to change with the times. This leads to issues. These proclivities crystallize to truncate the spirit of revolution or rebellion. They also fundamentally run counter or contrary to the principle of positive change. According to the philosopher Albert Camus, we face the fundamental problem of human life as the problem of the absurd. Thence, he recommends that we respond to our predicament by uniting as human beings, to transform life into a positive incentive to live and create. It is on this platform that he introduced the idea of 'rebellion', which he used interchangeably with 'revolt'. The attitude of rebellion is a refusal to remain passive in the face of evil, injustice and oppression. It is the determination to fight against absurdity, against evil, against injustice, *etc*., with all the means at one's disposal in a whole length of a life; it restores its majesty to that life (Camus in Murchland 1962: 61). The real fact is that in a repressing environment, rebellion must take the form of utter chaos and violence. A more salient fact that decrees the failure of traditional society is that 'neither submission nor rebellion generates development. Submission leaves a society without innovators, and rebellion diverts energies away from the constructive effort toward resistance, throwing up obstacles and destruction' (Grondona 2000: 48).

Ethnicity as a System for the Control of Human Nature or Human Nature as a Teleguide of Ethnicity

Wiredu (1992: 191–199) observes that 'any society without a modicum of morality must collapse'. Social morality, of which justice is a key aspect, is a means of clarifying the relationships between men and a medium of regulating human interpersonal behaviour. Morality is an emanation of people's overriding desire to preserve social harmony by ensuring that moral codes discourage injustice, deceit and anarchy in any system. The essence of morality is man's endeavour to harmonize conflicting interests, to play the role of an arbiter, and to secure that greatest possible general good (Perry 1974: 373; Bayles and Henley 1989: 10; Foot 1985: 208). According to Kupperman (1983: 4–10) the core of morality must be injunctions against harming others. It is on this basis that the question of the need for morality exhumes the age-long problematic of egoism. Egoism holds that morality should serve the interest of the self and that the goal of a person's action should be his own self-interest. In effect, egoism holds that man should not only seek his own interest in everything he does, but that he should act morally only if he has something to benefit from such an arrangement (Hospers 1973: 600). In a sense, egoism when practiced by a group will reflect in many ways, including isolation, intolerance, domination and discrimination which remain the hallmarks of ethnicity.

A popular conception of ethnicity is that which highlights its prominent negative aspects. Odugbemi (2001) makes it clear that 'ethnicity undermines the fundamental values without which we cannot build a sane, serious, democratic society' (Odugbemi 2001: 70). Lemarchand (1974) says that the overwhelming aim of ethnicity is its focus on exclusion of others from power. The ensuing contexts and struggles for control have decisive negative impacts on patron-client relationships and inter-ethnic identities (Lemarchand 1974: 143). Such convolutions in social organization and psychological pre-

dispositions simply replace the question of human survival on the center stage. The philosophical task is to examine how and why individual and collective human nature and actions have been at the core of violence, injustices and domination in history.

Given the reality of conflicts and prejudices, Brown (1989: 3) says that ethnic conflicts can be explained using the natural tendency towards ethnocentrism: people seem to trust and prefer those of their own cultural group, while being distant and distrusting of others. The increasing tendency of ethnic people to think fundamentally in terms of the ethnic group (Said and Simmons 1975: 65) leads to the real threat of mutual annihilation or the massive repression of the less privileged and competitors. We can understand the full import of things, when we read and see that ethnicity has led to state-sponsored slaughter, the oppression and murder (Riggs 1994: 584), unparalleled cultural diversity heralding constant conflict and bloodshed (Campbell 1992: 58) and sentiments motivating people to acts of extreme violence against the Other (Turton 1997: 3). For Turton (1997: 11) ethnicity has a strong mobilizing power to acquire greater leverage and competitive advantage. Thus, ethnicity often gives rise to ethnic conflicts in which people decide to employ their ethnic differences in pursuing competing interests (Osaghae 1994: 9). The end result of all of this according to Rosel (1997) is that ethnic conflicts have become politicized and radicalized thus assuming a self-sustaining character, which threatens the legitimacy and integrity of multi-ethnic states and which make a peaceful and enduring resolution or settlement difficult to negotiate (Rosel 1997: 146–153).

The Human Nature of Nigerians as a Subject in Need of Urgent Clarification

The reality on the ground in Nigeria is that the political culture of state-centralism, top-down developmental paradigms and other major social engineering instruments are the heritage of colonial capitalist hegemony with its dominant paradigms of alienation and marginalization. These values have ensured that effectual and broad based democratic participation is at best a mirage. Within the dominant political parties the realities of god-fatherism, violence, conflicts, money bag politics, a lack of internal democracy and the unethical breach by the incumbent government of written and unwritten agreements on a rotational formula for sharing political office among competitors have contributed to the current instability in democratic consolidation. The political and religious crisis leading to terrorism and low intensity warfare in northern Nigeria is partially explained by the typical disregard of the rotation formula devised and agreed upon for choosing contestants for the country's presidential office. This approach is known as zoning. Even though zoning is a very serious problem because it denies merit and undermines an egalitarian and equity-based reward system, yet as a principle of fair play in a turbulent multiethnic society, individuals and groups within the system have not allowed it to work. This raises the very problem of human nature that we are talking about as a basic problem of the Nigerians.

The above issue also links up with concerns over the development of a philosophical disposition as a core value or directing principle, given that most people in the Nigerian society may not have shown that the basic values of philosophy – independent thinking, tolerance, critical and balanced view of issues – can be adopted. There is still ethnic, political and religious intolerance, corruption and lack of equity, discipline and

the rule of law in living among others in an aspiring democratic society. We can agree with Ifeka (2000: 122) that the lack of trust between the rulers and the ruled in Nigeria ensured that there was an obstruction of national development at all levels of social existence. Furthermore, we can say that the absence or lack of operation of some core social values like trust, cooperation, compassion, justice, tolerance, *etc*., among different interests and segments in the society ensured that the country achieved little or no sustainable development and that different levels of national government failed to effectively manage the nation's resources for the overall security, peace, prosperity and well-being.

Other gaps in the character and effectiveness of Nigeria's democracy arise due to the perennial general corruption and inefficiency in public service delivery, a dominant role of politicization of ethnicity as a directing principle of social affairs and also a general citizens' dissatisfaction with the prevailing standard or quality of life and the potentials for attaining human dignity indices – notably, deficits health care, transport infrastructures and education. This developmental shortfall is obvious in the standard of living of those in the rural areas who lack access to good roads, free and safe water and so on. The poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged suffer most with the youth bearing the brunt. There is the real problem of socioeconomic disempowerment and marginalization of a broad group of citizens. These include the broad social class of vulnerable people such as rural dwellers, the low income earners, politicians and business people disfavoured by the current government, medium and low level government workers, pensioners or retired workers, rural peoples, uneducated people, physically challenged persons, destitute children, and the unemployed and underemployed youth.

Existing Strategies for Tackling Nigeria's Problem of Human Nature

In its history, Nigeria has raised up two guiding principles that were putative alchemic elixirs for managing ethnicity. Unfortunately, these strategies have failed woefully to make a difference as top to bottom social engineering and socialization processes. One of these principles is federalism. The discourse on federalism is obviously a social scientific engagement. In some way, the challenge of ethnicity has been confronted by the appeals to federalism and federal character. The obvious question is whether these strategies have worked at all or even worked well? And we know the answer to that: the lack of success of the strategy has ensured the persistence of the ethnic problem in a country like Nigeria. Osaghae (1994: 32) has put it bluntly that there are 'areas where the federal solution has not worked well.' In Suberu's words (1989: 321) 'although in the twentieth century the federal device has been used to unite multi-ethnic nations, in Nigeria it was introduced to abet ethnic nationalism.'

Osaghae (1994: 32) says that the federal solution has been preferred for managing the ethnic crises. What, however does the federal solution imply? Federalism is defined by 'the decentralization and devolution of state power to ethno-regional entities. A distributive policy known as federal character is the representation of various ethnic groups and sub-groups in the national decision-making process' (IDEA document 2000: 54). Olukoshi and Agbu (1996: 87) hold that the issues that dominate the discourse include the way of ensuring that federal political power is equally accessible to all Nigeri-

an nationalities so that the groups are allowed to have their own political and economic space in a radically restructured federation where the power of the state is reduced. This calls for a balance between the north and the south in the leadership of the country, in the distribution of political offices and the economic benefits accruing to the country. Suberu further observes 'the federal character principle has operated in practice to promote an aggressive sense of ethnicity' and if this is understood as implying equal representation of groups in the polity then this situation has generated relatively accentuated aggravation or agitation among ethnic communities for their share of whatever is a resource. Hence, 'it has come to be accepted in Nigeria that each state must have a university, a newspaper of its own run by the state government, a state broadcasting service and a number of state run commercial enterprises, most of which make a loss' (Dent 1995: 137). Given this shortfall in the federal principle we should obviously look for an alternative idea of ethnical rectification.

Another strategy that Nigeria has used is education. Education has also been an important instrument purportedly capable of overcoming the ethnic imbroglio. Education as it was bequeathed to African was expected to guarantee national recalibration for social engineering and advancement. According to Olukoshi and Agbu (1996: 98) restructuring of the country depends on the reinvention of the state's capacity to manage completing ethnicities and religious identities and address the problems of social inequality and uneven development. Education obviously has a role to play in the reinvention of the economy and politics of the state itself, and for that matter the moral character and professional conduct of the citizens. As McCloskey (1961: 107) notes, the state needs to place premium on moral issues in its educational system and also take a stand on these. The role of education in managing ethnicity in a structurally plural society depends on the distribution (either through law or extra-legal means) of civil and political rights and economic, social and other opportunities (Smith quoted in Edelstein 1974: 46).

Cooper (2002: 111) has noted that from the 1950s the development of education was arguably a central priority of the African states. However, it is true that the hopes that people had in education as a vector of liberation and transformation have largely been dashed. In our view, this is the more significant in the context of the ethnic factor. Presumptively, education was in fact supposed to resolve the crisis of ethnic identity in favour of modernization and national culture. This was expected to diminish the crisis of identity or peoples' struggle between identifying themselves as citizens of the nation-state as opposed to members of a particular ethnic sub-group (N'gethe 1995: 254). Definitely, these educational and ethnical imbalances affect adversely the human task of nation building. Thomas (1987: 15) holds that the task of nation building is to attempt the unification of all the disparate elements in the state and to imbue in then a national consciousness. Education as cultural transmission has been formatted in a colonial manner. Hence, it is a carrier of colonial values. Worse still, is the fact that education has not particularly functioned as an agent for the transmission of the values cherished by the state? It has failed in the inculcation of viable ethical education for human tolerance of the other, thereby ensuring national integration.

The social integration, calibration and decentralization of our education systems to confront and overcome crucial socio-economic exigencies imply the rethinking of the definition and roles of education in social, ideological, economic and security spheres.

Glazer (1981) has put it clearly that 'whatever our success in overcoming the legal presumption of ethnic superiority for one group, we have not been able to bring all groups to the level of approximate social and economic equality' (Glazer 1981: 15). Even though this point is made in respect of the United States, yet this observation clearly applies to other countries affected by the ethnic problematic. This includes Nigeria, which faces a greater objective of confronting the problems of social justice and economic redistribution for the well-being, comfort and progress of the majority.

Education has not been able to deal with divisive tensions, and to help develop a sense of unity. Education has proved incapable of dealing with the rivalries of the three main ethnic groups and a number of other minority ethnicities. Also the increasing pressure on scarce national resources and the competitions for them have ensured that education has produced no positive effect on national unity. The educational development in post-colonial Nigeria has led to imbalances and disunity while the unequal provision of education has aggravated the developmental imbalances. Meanwhile, the extended distribution of education has made individuals and groups to become aware of the opportunities that are denied or could be open to them. Over the years, dominance, rivalry, divide and rule, discrimination and other ills, have ensured that education has failed to have an impact on the lives of the citizens in Nigeria.

The failure of education in the promotion of national consciousness has arisen mainly from its emphasis as a means of socio economic improvement and a status symbol. Unfortunately, education has not been employed as an instrument for spreading human values and formation of a totally balanced personality. Thus, there is a gap in the promotion of the moral and social values necessary for the establishment of national cohesion and national consciousness in the society. The National Policy on Education of Nigeria, which was said to be an instrument for the establishment of national consciousness, has clearly failed in the attempt to entrench this value or ideal in the lives of people. This Policy has suffered the fate that has usually befallen most national programmes, policies and institutions in Nigeria, which is that it has failed to achieve its fundamental goals and objectives. The reason for this failure does not lie in the fact that the document has not generally been well written. Rather, the truth is that the social, political and economic structure, values and institutions that can bring the NPE document to fruition have either not been established or have failed to perform efficiently or effectively.

The reality of the Nigeria situation is deplorable and condemnable. The current picture is that many of those who were educated by the nation through scholarships and other financial assistance and rose to the highest positions of authority in the land, are the very ones who have contributed to the vitiation and collapse of the country through the development and pursuit of the ethnic agenda. Some of these people were educated with the resources found within the nation but could not make any enduring contribution to the society in the diverse areas of national unity. Thus, these people failed to use their skills, talents, training, knowledge and education for enhancing the well-being of the citizens and the country in general, as well as failed to ensure the fullest development of the country. Rather, these people most of whom are mainly the educated elites in military, civil, bureaucratic and academic spheres have been at the forefront of un-

dermining the nation's integrity through several unpatriotic acts. These acts include looting of the nation's or agencies treasuries, mismanagement of public or national resources and infrastructures, the unleashing of a wave of tyranny, oppression and collaborating in the deprivation on the bulk of the citizens of the country especially the less privileged, vulnerable, illiterate and oppressed peoples.

The generally lope-sided situation in education within and among the Nigeria ethnic groups has not really changed significantly since the nation's independence and, on the contrary, it has rather worsened due to the perversion, over-politicization and underfunding of the Nigerian educational system. Over the years, the northern parts of the country being the worse off for this. It must be pointed here that the bulk of those who occupied significant positions from which they could have effectively and positively influenced the education policies of the country (but did otherwise), came from the specific ethnic groups that dominated politics but were the most backward in terms of education.

The failures of the educational system in Nigeria has been clearly seen in the large hordes of uneducated social miscreants known as 'Area Boys' in the south western Nigeria or the 'Almajiri' in the Northern Nigeria, the youth militia in the Niger – delta region of Nigeria, the general scourge of smuggling rings, necrophilia, armed robbery and banditry, political thugs, prostitution, human trafficking and other opportunistic tendencies for violence and anarchy among youth in the country Nigeria. These delinquent and destitute youths are easily induced, co-opted and employed to foment anarchy and chaos in the society. They play particularly destructive roles in the political, religious or tribal conflicts in the Nigerian society. The gross failures of education and federalist principles have combined to highlight the critical defects of the social project called Nigeria.

Human Cooperation and the Common Good as Values for Social Order

Values are guides, standards, norms, things of interest, desirable, and of importance. They provide the basic standards which people can use to judge actions. Qingxiong (1999: 317) holds that values are contingent upon present social institutions, but they also go beyond the ordinary limits of the present institutions and cause their transformations. In the changing world the peoples' concepts of what is right, worthwhile or desirable are changing. Krech (1962: 220) notes that many of the attitudes of the individual reflect his values or his conception of what is 'good' or desirable. Dzobo (1992: 225) argues that the major functions of values are to serve as guides and judges for individual actions and to direct the choices and conduct of people in a culture. Fotopoulos (1997: 156) maintains that dominant social values cannot change until political and economic structures change. Fotopoulos (1997: 233) notes that individual and collective autonomy depends on living in a community-based society that is based on cooperation, mutual aid and solidarity. The phenomenon of economic or material deprivation can lead to the quest for the reordering of values.

Thus, Bertsch *et al.* (1991: 109) hold that people are likely to give pride of place to values that promote the wider devolution or distribution of power as opposed to concentration. Also people will demand greater respect and the opportunity to express their political beliefs and initiative. Kudadjie (1992) holds that the present situation is that there

is very little, if anything, in national policies for the cultivation of such values. The paucity of morally good human resources has thwarted efforts to bring about development thus the creation of a moral community will require moral education of the members of the society. The enforcement of morality requires a combination and variety of practices such as encouragement, reward, imparting of information and skills (Kudadjie 1992: 208–218).

Before going on to other things we need a set of fundamental values that can be considered as superior to ethnicity and any other overbearing value. This superior value is to be endorsed, if not on the grounds of being self-validating principle, then on the grounds of rational mutual advantage. Two principles that can be raised as dominant values for social order are reciprocity and common good. These principles are guaranteed by the combined powers of human contact with law and morals. However, the law promotes these principles by means of external rule-governed and legislative processes. Whereas, morality promotes reciprocity and the common good by seeking to inculcate internalized rules for the formation and direction of the human mind and action, law and morality seek to transform the human mind and society through organizational and character reformation. The core instruments of common good and reciprocity will impact on the human and institutional frameworks for liberation, transformation and rectification.

Reciprocity is important because it aims at developing a just society with reasonable individuals retaining feelings that reinforce interrelated actions among peoples. The synchronization of interests as the central focus of justice and order predicates itself on a concept of mutuality or the appreciation of reciprocal obligations. According to Bellamy and Hollis (1995: 5)

> Reciprocity is the ingredient of society. It aims at populating the just society with reasonable persons retaining feelings of neighbourliness with others. The reciprocal nature of life in a social order depends on the definition of roles into a set of obligations and expectations. For life in social context to have meaning, the activities or roles of each person must in some way be related to those of every other person.

In applying this principle, people and groups will be made aware of the backlash of their actions especially when faced with other situations where they are at a disadvantage. This principle of reciprocity will make people seek the common good not merely as an ideal but more immanently as a feature to be chosen by a rational person as the best choice in a multiethnic environment.

The aim of a society must consist in some good, which is to be achieved by the activity of that society. This good must be accomplished in such a way that it is useful both for the society itself and for its individual members as well (Brugger 1972: 62). According to Brugger, there are different ways of conceptualizing the common good. But the two major ways of doing this are as follows. The common good may be understood primarily as the perfection of the members through the existence of the society. Perfection here means enrichment with all the human values that make for a full life. It is in this sense that the common good is conceived for the society and its members. For

Brugger, the second approach to the notion of common good consists in the fact that it is a state or condition of the society. The common good is, in a sense, an organizing value, which requires two things. First is that the society should have a way of endowing its members with the means necessary for the attainment of its goal. Secondly, the society should also have a way of influencing its members so that they could attain effective cooperation (Brugger 1972: 62–63).

The central value of the common good is that it presupposes some shared understanding of the requirements of justice and human rights which are necessary for proper living. It is difficult to have a viable society if there is no conception of common good. Many writers have affirmed the state's duty to ensure common justice and fairness. Wojtyla (1979: 289–300) holds that

> the special value of the community is to be identified with the common good. Here, the various actions take place in relation to some common value(s). The common good, which means different things for different levels of community, however corresponds to the transcendence of the persons being the objective basis for constituting them in a social community as 'we'.

The common good can only be attained when a certain notion of solidarity is accepted. To the extent that there is a need for the conscious and systematic institutionalization of the mutual bond in the society, then the actualisation of the common good becomes a moral concern. Mill (1990: 302–303) holds that justice arises from the fact of living in the society, and it renders it indispensable that each man should be bound to observe a certain line of conduct towards the rest. In this case, it requires that individuals must recognize the personhood of others and their rights to have a secure and worthwhile existence. As a result, the counter-productive strategy of disobedience to laws, which denies reciprocity and justice, will define the ethnic mind-set as truncated. The actual solution here is to erect some model or principle that will have superior primacy than the ethnic consciousness. This seems to be a key way that security may be assured.

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