

Philosophy and Sustenance of Human Dignity in the 21st Century

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The distortion and dissolution of the concept of person has led to hideous atrocities, such as annihilation of the Jews in the previous century, the continued oppression of the Palestinian people, the massacre of Moslems in Srebrenica, the Rwandan genocide, racial discrimination, the manifold manipulations of man through science and technology, barbarous and iniquitous laws (such as the legalization of abortion, etc.), the horrendous killings by Islamic terrorists (such as ISIS in Syria and the Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria), the increasing biomedical researches as in stem cell, etc. This paper seeks to make it clear that man occupies a central place in the created order. From this perspective, man enjoys a special status and should not to be treated as mere object. Thus, it is arguable that the ontological basis for a *substance* being denominated as *person* is its special dignity, which separates it from a mere thing. Human dignity, therefore, is an intrinsic quality of all human beings. Among other things, this paper will strive to investigate various violations of human dignity and the role of philosophy in sustaining the dignity of human person in the 21st century.

Keywords: man, human, person, dignity, violations, philosophy, sustenance, 21st century

Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed many ill treatments against the dignity of human person ranging from genocide, human trafficking, terrorism, to ethical issues, *et cetera*. As Battista Mondin (1985/2011) asserted, the dissolution of the concept of person has led to monstrous atrocities like “extermination of the Jews and Palestinians, racial discrimination, the manifold manipulations of man through science and technology, barbarous and iniquitous laws such as the legalization of abortion, etc.” (p. 253). John Ekei (2013) supported Mondin’s view in his assertion that “when a generation loses the meaning and the essential platform under which the reverence paid to the individual-as-person is rooted and sustained, that generation never ceases to remain in lamentation of crisis” (p. 20). Instances of this abound today are: the murderous activities of ISIS in Syria and Levente, the abductions and killings by Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria, the increasing biomedical researches as in stem cell, etc. Consequently, this paper contends that man occupies a central place in the created order. He is not to be treated as mere physical object. Human dignity, therefore, is an intrinsic quality of all human beings. Hence, this paper will strive to unravel the role of philosophy towards sustaining human dignity in the 21st century.

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Philosophical Conception of Man

Man (*anthropos*) is a generic term that includes both human male and female. Man is an intricately complex and mysterious being who is so difficult to be defined. This is because man is “a being so vast, so varied, so multiform, that every definition demonstrates itself as too limited. Man’s aspects are too numerous” (Chukwujekwu, 2013, pp. 143-144). Hence, Battista Mondin is right to observe that the question “What is man? (*Was ist der Mensch?*)” is “the interrogative of all interrogatives—the most pressing and piercing interrogative of all” (p. 1). In other words, says Mondin (1985/2011), the principle and fundamental question for us as human beings is that “man is the supreme question for man” (p. 1). Man is a problem for himself because “the essence of man, always manifesting new depths, constantly provokes a renewal of this question which humanity will never be able to silence” (Chukwujekwu, 2013, p. 13). Mondin (1985/2011) continued to affirm that man is “a dynamic being”, he is “gifted with speculative dynamism, a dynamism which is enormously superior to that of every other being of this world” (p. 25). Consequently, the only way to discover “who man is” is to study his dynamism and his action.

Wallace (1977) observed that man, in the classical definition by Aristotle, is “*animal rationalis*” (a rational animal), “an animal like other animals, but distinct by having the power of universal, abstract reason, and all that follows from it” (p. 80). Thus, affirms Wallace, “like all living things, man is a union of body and soul, but the human soul differs from all others in being a rational or intellectual soul” (p. 80). Following Mondin, Aquinas¹ takes man to be “a rational subsistent”; for Blaise Pascal, man is “a thinking reed”; and for Mournier, man is “incarnate spirit” (p. 20). From the foregoing definitions of man, it is evident that “man has something that specifically belongs to him and him alone, not given to other non-human beings” (Chukwujekwu, 2013, p. 145). In short, man has both corporeal and spiritual elements. These two elements together make up the complete man.

The mystery (or enigma) of “who man is” can only be resolved through a precise analysis of those characteristics that are specific to man: “Such as universal knowledge [intelligence], self-consciousness, liberty[freedom], language, culture, work, art, technique, play, etc.” (Mondin, 1985/2011, p. 12). In all these, self-transcendence is the unique one that qualifies him as a person. Men share in the essential elements which make up human nature. In sharing this nature, Wallace (1977) underlined that “each individual man is also a *person*” (p. 82). Thus, as Mondin (1985/2011) strongly insisted, man’s personhood (or personality) affirms the grandeur, dignity, nobility, uniqueness, unrepeatability, absolute value, autonomy, and sacredness of the individual (p. 244).

Human Person: Meaning and Characteristics

John Ekei (2013) observed that the dignity of human individual is found also in the concept of human person (p. 20). Thus, he affirms that the understanding of the word “individual” refers to the apprehension of two basic characteristics: “human” and “person” (p. 18). According to Danto (1967), “neither in common usage nor in philosophy has there been a univocal concept of person” (p. 110). One written account suggests that the term “person” derives from the Latin word *persona*, which is traceable to the Greek *prosopon*. However, in the Medieval era, the main stages in the evolution of the concept of person are found in the works of Boethius and Aquinas. According to Mondin (1985/2011), in his *De Persona et Duabus Naturis*, Boethius defines a person

¹ Aquinas, T. *Summa Theologiae*, pp. 1, 23, 3; Quoted in B. Mondin, *Philosophical Anthropology*, p. 248.

as “*persona est rationalis naturae individual substantia*” (p. 247), that is, a person is “an individual substance of a rational nature”. In refining this definition, says Mondin, Aquinas completes it by adding: “a person is a subsistence of rational nature” [i.e., *subsistens rationalis naturae*] (p. 247). From these, Mondin (1985/2011) concluded that a person “is the individual and concrete man, in all his concreteness, uniqueness, and unrepeatability” (p. 248). For Aquinas, says Mondin, “a person signifies that which is most perfect in all of nature, that is, what subsists in rational nature” (p. 248).

In the modern period, there was emphasis on intellectual aspect and on auto-transcendence. Here, we have Kant, Hegel, Sartre, and Descartes. Psychologically, observes Mondin, Descartes (1990/1996) argued that self-consciousness, intellectual knowledge are the essential and distinctive prerogative of man (p. 251), which is seen in his *Cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore, I am). In the contemporary period, emphasis on *person* was personalistic and existential (because of the human situation). Here, we have Emmanuel Mounier and Charles Renouvier. Mondin (1985/2011) observed that, based on the dialogical concept of person, Emmanuel Mounier argues that a person is something absolutely subjective and individualistic (p. 253). So, a person can only be resolved to incarnate existence.

In all the definitions of person, only the ontological definition expresses best what is indispensable to the concept of person: autonomy of being, subsistence. Without these, every other quality crumbles. Following Mondin (1985/2011), ontological definition of person is sufficient because it “includes the generic element (subsistence) and the specific element (rationality)” (p. 256). Thus, Wallace (1977) insisted that ontological basis for a substance being denominated a person is “its special dignity, which separates it from a mere thing... this consists in its entitative sufficiency for independent subsistence, its dominion over its own activity, and its spirituality conferring on it a perfect and enduring manner of existing” (p. 83). The qualities of person include: subsistence, consciousness, and communication. To these is added also auto-transcendence. This is because it is “in this quality that the sense and the value of man is expressed” (Mondin, 1985/2011, p. 256). As a rational or intellectual being, he is an image of his Creator and thus stands in special relationship to God.

Human Person and Auto-transcendence

We have earlier mentioned that it is in the quality of auto-transcendence that the sense and the value of man are expressed. It is the profound reason why man is a person. Mondin (1985/2011) defined auto-transcendence as “the property of man by which he constantly goes beyond himself in all that he thinks, wills, and in all that he realises” (p. 197). Accordingly, he says that it “is that characteristics and exclusive movement of man with which he continually surpasses himself, all that he is, all that he wishes, and all that he has” (p. 199). Obviously, auto-transcendence is the unique characteristic of man, the highest qualifying trait of human person. This is because it creates incessant tension in man, and is a movement towards the Infinite or the Absolute Ideal (God). Man rises beyond himself to “immerse himself in God, who is the one being capable of taking him to the perfect and perennial realisation of himself” (p. 207). This is the secure foundation of individual’s absolute value. Hence, as Augustine puts it: Our hearts are restless until they rest in you Oh God (Augustine, 1986/2012, p. 13). Moreover, the phenomenon of auto-transcendence is the best proof of the spiritual and immaterial nature of man. Furthermore, of all the creatures, only man is characterised as person. We can conclude at this point that man has dignity not only because he is a human being but because he is also a person. All human persons have dignity intrinsically attached to them. What then is human dignity?

Human Dignity Explained

Richard Ashcroft (2005) argued that the concept of dignity has acquired widespread currency of late, yet its nature and importance as a philosophical concept are intensely controversial. In other words, it is difficult to define human dignity as the concept is not defined in the first international document which recognizes inherent human dignity and the protection thereof, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1946) and many international and national documents enacted thereafter. But then, “dignity” is recognized as a core issue in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and as a central nursing value within the International Code of Ethics and national nursing codes. It is also a central concept in philosophy of existence and ethics as a philosophical science. Be that as it may, the English term “dignity” derives from the 12th century French *dignité*, and these in turn had their roots in the Latin *dignus*, worthy, from *dignitas*, which Lewis and Short define as “worth, worthiness, merit, desert” (Donnley, 2009, p. 10). The Wikipedia records that dignity is “the right of a person to be valued and respected for their own sake, and to be treated ethically” (n.d). It is of significance in morality, ethics, law, and politics as an extension of the Enlightenment-era concepts of inherent, inalienable rights. Over and above everything, dignity relates to a person’s intrinsic worth—a value of all people, which they are born with as human beings. It is an individual or group’s sense of self-respect and self-worth, physical and psychological integrity and empowerment. Steinmann (2016) noted that inherent dignity comprises the totality of the uniqueness of a human being’s nature; his intelligence and his sensibilities (p. 19). Réaume aptly describes this element of dignity:

To ascribe human dignity to human beings not as empirical matter, but as a moral matter—that is, to treat it as an inherent aspect of humanity.... In this basic sense, dignity is ascribed to human beings independently of their particular accomplishments or merits of praiseworthiness. It refers to a kind of worth that is not contingent on being useful, or attractive, or pleasant or otherwise serving the ends of others.

In the Enlightenment era, through the thinking of philosophers, such as Immanuel Kant, the idea of human dignity came to mean that individuals should be treated as ends and not simply as means to an end. In other words, humans have dignity to the extent that they are recognized as autonomous individuals having the capacity to make their own choices and determine their own destinies (Song, 2015). According to George Kateb (2011):

The core idea of human dignity is that on earth, humanity is the greatest type of beings—or what we call species because we have learned to see humanity as one species in the animal kingdom, which is made up of many other species along with our own—and that every member deserves to be treated in a manner consonant with the high worth of the species. (pp. 3-4)

As Steinmann rightly observes, the basic elements of human dignity as a result revolve around the *ontological claim*, which refers to man’s unique qualities that are priceless and irreplaceable and constitute every individual’s inherent dignity. Lastly, the basic elements of human dignity revolve around the *limited-state claim*, which embodies the Kantian idea that the state should exist for the sake of the individual, and not vice versa (Steinman, 2016, p. 19).

Philosophical Foundation of Human Dignity: An Overview

Dignity is humanity’s most prized possession, which is rooted in Ancient philosophy, as well as in Christian theology. The concept of human dignity (*dignitas hominis*) is one of the fundamental philosophical

innovations of the Renaissance. Cicero referred to *dignitas* as relating to human beings as human beings not dependent on any particular additional status. In this use of dignity, man is contrasted with animals:

It is vitally necessary for us to remember always how vastly superior is man's nature to that of cattle and other animals; their only thought is for bodily satisfactions.... Man's mind, on the contrary, is developed by study and reflection.... From this we may learn that sensual pleasure is wholly unworthy of the dignity of the human race. (McCrudden, 2008, pp. 655-724)

Another philosophical source comes from the biblical account of man as "made in the image of God" as recorded in Genesis 2:26. During the Medieval Age, with the ferment of debate in intellectual circles about the relationship between God and Man, the idea of *dignitas* came to be used as the way of distinguishing between man and other creatures, as it had in Cicero. The Catechism of Catholic Church (1992) incorporated this idea of man as made in the image of God as central to its conception of human dignity:

Of all visible creatures only man is "able to know and love his creator." He is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake," and he alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity.... Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a *person*, who is not just something, but someone. (p. 101)

The humanists of the Renaissance identified dignity as an important bridge between classical Roman thinking and church doctrine in another important way. They argued that one of the most important gifts of God to man was the gift of reason. Using reason, therefore, came to be closely connected with the idea of dignity. The humanists attempted to reconcile classical thought and dogmatic theology by emphasizing the idea of mankind as having dignity because man is made in the image of God. Thus, as Arieli² argued:

The expression "the inherent dignity of man" ... defines the ontological status of man which derives ultimately from the fundamental conceptions of the West created by the fusion of Jewish-Christian monotheism with those derived from classical and humanistic conceptions of man. (McCrudden, 2008, pp. 655-724)

In the Enlightenment, the dignity of man came to be developed philosophically, and used as the basis, most famously, of Immanuel Kant's use of the concept. Kant's understanding of human dignity in his *Metaphysics of Morals* requires that individuals should be treated as ends and not simply as means to an end (McCrudden, 2008, pp. 655-724). Secondly, over time, this connection between dignity and Kant's moral philosophy has become probably the most often cited non-religiously-based conception of dignity. Indeed, observes Bognnetti, some regard him as "the father of the modern concept of human dignity" (pp. 655-724). Thirdly, whether rightly or wrongly, the conception of dignity most closely associated with Kant is the idea of dignity as autonomy; that is, the idea that to treat people with dignity is to treat them as autonomous individuals able to choose their destiny.

Violations of Human Dignity

There are several ways that human dignity is violated in the 21st century. It could be in form of human trafficking, wars, terrorism, humiliation, objectification, sexual exploitation, degradation, such as selling oneself to slavery, or when a state authority deliberately puts prisoners in inhuman living conditions. There are, as well, acts that strip a person or a group of their human characteristics as treating them as mere animals or as

² Arieli. "On the necessary and sufficient conditions for the emergence of the dignity of man and his rights"; quoted in C. McCrudden, *Human Dignity and Judicial Interpretation of Human Rights*.

a lower type of human beings. Instances of violations of human dignity in this century abound. We have earlier mentioned such acts as in genocides committed during the Rwanda civil war, where a minority people were compared to insects. The Military in Myanmy has been engaged in waging a genocidal campaign characterized by mass killings and gang rapes against Rohingya people. In Libya, about 1,100 people have been killed and 1,500 injured in its factional civil war. Recently, on Sunday 4th August 2019, the UN backed faction of the national army in Libya commanded by Gen. Hafter was reported to have deliberately targeted and killed about 41 innocent civilians at a wedding ceremony in Murzuq. There are other acts of violation of human rights and human dignity today, such as torture, rape, social exclusion, labour exploitation, bonded labour, slavery, female genital mutilation, sale of human organs (body parts, like kidneys, and foetuses) from living “donors”; seeking patent rights over human genes; making animal-human chimeras; obliging someone to live in abject poverty; pornography; torture; sex selection by pre-implantation genetic diagnosis; death in irremediable physical or psychological suffering; and abandonment to senility in a nursing home. We shall treat a few of these briefly hereunder.

Human Trafficking

The United Nations’ Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children defined human trafficking as:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (UN, 2004, Art. 3)

Trafficking in persons is a serious crime and a grave violation of human dignity in the 21st century. Every year, thousands of men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers, in their own countries and abroad. Women and girls are the primary victims of this demand for human trafficking. Ochab (2018) reported a case of human trafficking:

A prime example is the case of 3,200 Yazidi women and girls who were abducted in Sinjar in August 2014. These women and girls were trafficked to Syria where they were subjected to forced conversion, forced marriage, rape and sexual abuse, forced abortions, physical and mental abuse, forced labor and much more. The case of the Yazidi women abducted from Sinjar is an extreme case of human trafficking, however, human trafficking is not just confined to war-ridden or failed states. No country is immune to human trafficking. The crime is also committed right under our noses, and by men and women in suits.

There should be a stiffer penalty for trafficking in persons, since it represents an instance of a grave violation of human dignity in this century.

Slave Trade

Julius P. Rodriguez (1997) observed that “it is very difficult to understand the modern world without making reference to the most perplexing elements of human condition” (p. xiii). One of these elements is slavery. Slavery is one of the violations of human dignity. Williams (1967) defined slavery as signifying

a social and economic institution in which one human being is the legal property of another, or, as the condition of such a human being who is thus become a *res non persona*, a human chattel without rights or privileges. (p. 281)

The *International Definition of Slavery* that existed since in 1926 reads: “Slavery is the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised” (Allain & Bales, 2012). During the Transatlantic Slave Trade, millions of Africans were transported as slaves to different parts of the globe especially America. Hence, Walter Rodney (1972) quipped that African slave trade refers to the “shipment of captives from Africa to various other parts of the world where they were to live and work as the property of Europeans” (p. 108). The slaves gotten from Africa were shipped across the Atlantic in conditions of great cruelty to America where they labour in producing sugar, cotton and tobacco. As a result, people of African descent were spread throughout the Americas and Western Europe. Oguejiofor (2001) described the African slave trade as “the most iniquitous transaction in human history” (p. 26). Finally, one cannot fail to mention the fact of modern slavery today in different parts of the world. For instance, there are people in slavery in Bangladesh and India where people, especially under-aged children, are forced to work in different fish processing camps and brick-moulding industries under harsh conditions that are below their dignity as human persons.

Wars

Going down memory lane, one recalls that the World War I probably had more far-reaching consequences vis-à-vis violations of human rights and dignity than any other preceding wars. Chemical weapons were used in the First World War. More so, the destructive and devastating World War II that took place from 1st September 1939 to 12th September 1945. There was heavy loss of human lives. The world cannot forget in a hurry the Nazi Germany holocaust against millions of Jews. In respect of this fact, Cameron (2014) recorded that:

The Second World War ... was the greatest and deadliest war in human history, with over 57 million lives lost. In combat, approximately eight million Russians, four million Germans, two million Chinese and one million Japanese soldiers lost their lives. Britain and France each lost hundreds of thousands. The civilian toll was probably higher—an estimated 22 million Soviet citizens were killed, and six million Jews in the Holocaust.

It is most unfortunate that wars, civil violent insurgencies, and uprisings that took place in the previous century at the cost of many human lives have not totally disappeared in the world. Instead, they still take place in this 21st century. One cannot forget the massacre of thousands of Moslems in Srebrenica in the former Yugoslavia Republic towards the close of the 12th century. Instances can be cited today of the murderous activities of ISIS/ISIL in Syria and Iraq, Al-Qaida in Afghanistan, Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, a brutal civil war in Yemen, violent civil uprisings in Sudan, pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, etc. In all this, many innocent human lives are unfortunately caught in cross fires by the lethal weapons of the government’s security forces and consequently brutally destroyed. The consequences of wars, insurgencies and violent protests going on in various parts of the world today are bewildering and totally unacceptable, since they are gravely detrimental to the protection and preservation of human rights and dignity.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Human Dignity

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, according to Babalola and Chuks (2015), is “a declaration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948” (p. 49). It was drafted by Eleanor Roosevelt. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* recognised the dignity of human person. It made it a fundamental right of any human creature. In its preamble, it reads thus:

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.... Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people.... Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. (UN, UDHR Preamble 3-8)

The Declaration also underscores that all men are equal and are to be treated equally: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood” (UN, UDHR, Art. 1, Par. 13). More so, the *Charter of the United Nations of 1946* has this to say of human dignity in its objectives:

To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.... (Charter of UN, 1945)

Member nations of the UN should be held more accountable for grave violations of the articles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which clearly recognise the dignity of human person.

Philosophy and Sustenance of Human Dignity

Philosophy can sustain human dignity by raising critical questions on all ideologies and praxis that distort the dignity of human person in the 21st century. As a personal attitude to life, philosophy critically looks into the large scheme of things that affect man. As Eugene (2011/2014) observed, philosophy “grows out of our developing awareness of the problems of human existence” (p. 23). Some of these problems of life include all that distort the dignity of man that we have earlier mentioned in this paper. Furthermore, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) belonged to the epoch of enlightenment philosophy which was marked by rejection of all religious authority, the affirmation of the sole criterion of reason in human judgement, accentuation of the dignity, freedom and autonomy of the individual (Okafor, 2011, p. 68). Kant’s (1964) moral philosophy has bequeathed to later ethical thoughts a legacy which recognises the dignity of human person. This is found in his categorical imperative: “Act only on that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should now become a universal law” (p. 70). In its second formulation, the categorical imperative includes: “always treat persons (including ourselves) as ends in themselves, and never simply as means to an end” (Chukwujekwu, 2007, p. 34). This reformulation “emphasises the unique value and dignity of human life that makes it deserve the most ultimate moral respect” (Jimoh & Olojede, 2015/2016, p. 2). And so, our way of life should reflect this. It should be based on the intrinsic value and dignity of the human person.

Another way philosophy can also promote human dignity in the 21st century lies in its recognition that human dignity requires freedom from coercion and all inhuman treatments. Freedom is an intrinsic quality of man. It is fundamentally self-determination (Ekwutosi, 2006, p. 85). Jean Paul Sartre is one of the philosophers that argue for total and absolute freedom of man. He believes that we do not have freedom, we are freedom. Based on his line of argument, observes Iroegbu (1995), Sartre writes:

I am necessarily a consciousness [of] freedom since nothing exists in consciousness except as a non-thetic consciousness of existing.... I am condemned to be free. This means that no limits to my freedom can be found except freedom itself. Or, if you prefer, that we are not free to cease being free. (p. 254)

From this Sartrean model, freedom is seen as central to the existence of man. But it does not end there. Sartre holds that within this freedom, there is responsibility. Thus, man chooses what he wills and does what he chooses in his concrete existence but then takes full responsibility for every choice he makes. The human person is “essentially created to be free. His liberty is linked to his nature endowed with the faculty of reason. He expresses this freedom in his choice and decision” (Okafor, 2011, p. 76). This shows the beauty of human dignity.

Evaluation

What could be said to be the reason behind the incessant violations against human dignity on the increase on a daily basis in the world today? From all we have seen above in this paper, the answer is not far-fetched. In part, it lies in the lack of the appreciation of the importance of the true nature of human being and his high dignity in the created order. Hence, Ekei’s (2013) observation is apt: “In a situation where the true concept of man is not commonly appreciated [as in the 21st century] Hobbes’ war against all has become the order of the day” (p. 20). And so, philosophy addresses all attacks on human dignity by raising critical questions so as to find out whether they stand the test of reason. This philosophy does through its tenets/doctrines, tools, and schools of thought or movement.

Moreover, as Jimoh and Ologede (2015/2016) argued, “ethical abuse of human subjects is still prevalent in researches” (p. 1). Biomedical research uses modern day medical technology to test hypothesis so as to deduce conclusions that are generalizable as theories and principles involving human subjects. If such researches are not morally guided, it abuses the sacredness of human life and the dignity of human person. As a philosophical science, ethics which establishes the moral order of human acts is required to check and balance the procedural system of such research (p. 1).

Against the arguments of the pro-abortionists, euthanasia, human cloning, human trafficking and suicide bombers, it is an established fact that human life is the most fundamental of all the possible human values. Man’s right to life is the most fundamental of all human rights. Life is of great value in itself. One has the obligation to protect and preserve one’s life and those of others. Morality is not based on sentiments. Sickness or pain does not reduce the value of life to nothingness. On the contrary, sickness calls for love. Finally, they are not morally permissible. To take human life is to usurp God’s right. Nobody has right to terminate his or her life or that of another person. It is against the dignity of human person.

Recommendation and Conclusion

It is noted that the importance of respecting a person’s dignity is also tied to respecting their bodily integrity for “rationality confers upon everyone an intrinsic worth and dignity” (Jimoh & Ologede, 2015/2016, p. 16). And so, appropriating the critical roles of philosophy in sustaining human dignity in the 21st century, this work recommends that researches should never use human subject as a means to an end, no matter the loftiness of the idea.

In an age where the inner voice of conscience is lost, the dignity of man is distorted. Conscience is the power to evaluate the right things to do and the wrong ones to avoid. The judgment of conscience is “an evaluative one concerning the moral value or disvalue of one’s action/act and, for that reason, about oneself as a person” (Chukwujekwu, 2007, p. 226). In the final analysis, human dignity ought to be respected. It is an intrinsic and fundamental value and right of every human being. Philosophy should mount its critical

searchlight on all forms of dehumanizing treatments meted on human beings today in many parts of the world, which distort their dignity.

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