

EXPOSITION OF JOHN STUART MILL'S "NOTION ON HARM PRINCIPLE AND ITS DEVELOPMENT OF POSITIVE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RELATIONS IN NIGERIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

This essay analyzes John Stuart Mill's conception of liberty in the context of modern culture. It makes the case that Mill's "Harm Principle" in large part lays the basis for the development of positive social relationships and a peaceful way of life, as well as the improvement of arrangements meant to bind the many parts of an already split and fractured society together. The "Harm Principle" is a result of Mill's theory of liberty, which is outlined in his renowned essay *On Liberty* and is a crucial component of it. As a result, the work at hand in this essay entails both a critical analysis of Mill's "Harm principle" and the identification of specific social interactions (such as the sociopolitical relations that exist in Nigeria and the inter-group relations that exist among religious groups), where this idea may be used to promote societal peace. Since the issues are in our surrounding area (Nigeria) have aroused our interest in using Mills Harm's principle, instances of our analysis of ill social relationships from Nigeria, which represents various societies, are taken. However, this effort does not assert that such a theory is limitless or that its use would be problematic without specific constraints. In light of this, the work offers to determine the boundaries of how far the Harm principle may be employed in regulating human behavior.

Keywords: John Stuart Mill, Harm Principle, Socio-political Relations

Introduction

Putting a good theory into real-world situations to determine how well it can account for social realities is the most effective technique to assess its applicability. One of these theories is John Stuart Mill's notion of liberty. It is undeniable that the teachings of Mill's theory of liberty, together with other philosophical postulates, contributed to molding the minds of the founders of numerous constitutions throughout human history. This is seen in the importance

placed by these constitutions on ideas like freedom, liberty, and equality. Therefore, the goal of this essay is to further discover more ambiguous areas in social interaction where a component of Mill's theory of liberty may be the magic bullet. In order to accomplish this, our objective is to assess the viability of what is known as Mill's "Harm Principle," which encapsulates the core of his theory of liberty. Mill's harm principle is the idea that each individual has the right to act as he/she wants, as long as these actions do not harm others (Mill, 1860). This principle (applicable both to political and individual morality) holds that not the state, nor anybody else, should interfere in anyone's activities unless those activities will harm somebody other than themselves (he believed people should be free to hurt themselves if they wanted). Mill held a utilitarian view that our actions should maximize happiness and reduce suffering. He raised concerns about the democratic system and elective government, noting that the "will of the people", is in fact the will of the most numerous or the most active part of the people, which is not necessarily the best for everyone as all people are different. This is the reason civil rights laws were designed to protect the minorities, even if the majority decides it's okay to abuse or bully them. However, these overriding laws do not extend over all aspects of life and many people may still feel disadvantaged by the democratic system and majority's rule. Mill felt that a better system would be where every individual engaged in their own "experiment in living", without any government interference, so far as it does not harm others. He argued that if each person was free to make his or her own choices it would maximize society's utility.

Mill's harm principle is the idea that people should be free to do whatever they want, without any intervention from state or individuals, unless their actions harm somebody other than themselves. He argued that if each person was free to make his or her own choices it would maximize happiness in society. It should be noted, nevertheless, that no part of Mill's theory of liberty bears this moniker. Instead, it was a name that his readers and critics gave to the component of his theory of liberty that outlines the circumstances that should guide people's acts. It could be important to begin our study by analyzing the major points of his theory of liberty for the sake of clarity. A person's liberty extends to authorities above the society, according to the harm principle. The premise holds that people have the freedom to think whatever they want. Regardless of whether it goes against popular opinion, society shouldn't infringe upon such freedom. The right to hold an opinion that differs from society is granted to that individual. In addition, everyone ought to be free to practice their own religion, hobbies, and likes. As long as one does not do harm to others while pursuing their interests, one's tastes and passions do not need to align with society's moral standards. A person has the right to pursue their own interests, even if those interests are morally dubious in the eyes of society, and society shouldn't attempt to restrict that freedom (Mill, 2010). In contrast, the damage principle leaves one open to injury from oneself and only addresses stopping someone from harming others. The self-vulnerability happens, and according to Mill, power should not be used over a person since, even in cases where it is morally or physically advantageous to the

person, that does not justify interfering with that person's decision-making. Even if something seems intelligent and right to other people, an individual cannot be forced to do something just because it will make him happy or make other people

Since he or she is independent, he or she should have the complete right to act in a way that hurts that person but does not bother others. This implies that some behaviors, although being detrimental, cannot be outlawed and that the only thing one can do is try to talk someone out of doing something bad to themselves (Mill, 2010). The idea is that people should be free to exercise their sovereignty and that society should adapt to their needs. The damage principle was developed by Mill in order to prevent people from being oppressed by the acceptance or rejection of their differing opinions in society based solely on the preferences of others. Because it disapproves of an individual's actions, society shouldn't be able to put regulations or limits on them. If society did this, it would imply that the rule of the majority had authority over an individual and so reject the fundamental human right to freedom, which is the essence of what it is to be human. Furthermore, society would have fewer regulations and focus more on the welfare of its members if people were free to act whenever they pleased as long as they did not harm others. As a result, the society would expend less time, money, and energy passing legislation, keeping an eye on the public, and punishing offenders.

Minority rights are protected by the damage principle. The majority does not have to force its will on the minority because the principle opposes elevating majority rule above the rights of an individual. Individuals who identify as members of a minority, be it based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, or religion, are entitled to autonomy and self-determination. By seeking to force their beliefs on the minority, the dominant majority should not be able to govern them. The minority may suffer harm as a result of the majority's wrong opinions. Because of this, the damage principle shields the minority from the tyranny of the majority. Although the minority may only consist of one person, the majority should not have any power over them (Mill, 2010).

However, the harm principle serves as a constraint by prohibiting people from harming other people. It follows that those whose activities injure others have the right to be punished by society. It would be challenging to define harm in this situation because what is hurtful to one person may not be harmful to another. In order to ensure that everyone coexists in harmony and that no one oppresses another, society should address the differing opinions of its members.

John Stuart Mill's Notion on Liberty

John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) held the view that the line between individual freedom and the authority of the state needed to be drawn in order to ensure the sustainability of sociopolitical stability and the peaceful coexistence of all members of society. The 1859 publication of Mill's essay *On Liberty* was the result of this intellectual ideal. Since Mill's article *On Liberty* expresses his

perspective on liberty, discussing Mill's position on liberty either directly or indirectly discusses this section of the article. In order to make his points more clear to his readers, he divides the book into five sections: an introduction; a chapter on "liberty of discussion;" a chapter on "The defense of individuality;" a chapter on "Of the Limits to the Authority of Society over the Individual;" and the final chapter on "Applications."

One ought to keep in mind that Mill's viewpoint in *On Liberty* was a product of circumstance. The literary work was written when Europe was going through a crisis. At that time, the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, and the rise of the revolutionaries who were promoting the Napoleonic ideals of Equality, Liberty, and Fraternity were all having an impact on Europe. It was around this time that representative democracy began to expand across all of Europe. The inspiration for *On Liberty* most likely surfaced during Mill's trip to France following his mental anguish and the Reform Act of 1832. At this point, he saw that, although extremely important and vital, the expansion of suffrage (representative government) was unable to stop the ruling class's displays of egotism on a consistent basis. His views against the tyranny of the majority, which are clearly stated in his essay *On Liberty*, were sparked by this. To be more precise, Mill is concerned in *On Liberty* with the impact of democratization as a superior form of governance compared to the authoritarian regimes of antiquity. He provides a succinct overview of how liberty has evolved as a political ideal or notion and how it has been exposed to varying degrees of rejection and persecution. But the introduction of democracy has made the power of the rulers different from that of the people, and thus, there has emerged the necessity to identify a limit to the authority of the ruler in order to prevent unwarranted infringement by the rulers on the liberty of the people. Now that it has been established that the so-called majority rule is actually the people ruling among themselves, it presents another issue known as "the tyranny of the majority." It is indeed a fact that of all systems of government, the democratic system in our days seems to be the fairest in terms of the status of individual liberty and the extent of the power of the ruler. But tragically enough, its practice does not totally. Therefore, the presence of democracy does not end injustice in a society. Even if 'the people' decide the laws, it is nevertheless possible for the majority to enact policies that oppress or otherwise discriminate against the minority. Because of this, Mill sees the rule of the majority as a demon or an evil that all of us should avoid. The formal frameworks of a law's enactment or the manner of government policy are two ways that the tyranny of the majority may manifest itself.

Thus, in his book *On Liberty*, Mill emphasizes two key ideas that need to be taken into consideration in order to advance civilization: (i) total freedom of speech and thinking within a certain political system, and (ii) the importance of individual rights. These two fundamentally distinct facets of human life are at the core of Mill's attention. As a result, Mill said that the fundamental motivation for writing *On Liberty* was to:

"advocate one very simple principle, (which is) entitled to govern absolutely the dealings of society with the individual. "According to this concept, self-protection is the only reason that humans, either individually or collectively, is justified in interfering with another person's right to pursue their own interests. That protecting others from harm is the only reason that authority may legitimately be used against the will of any member of a civilized community. (Mill, 1947: 9)

In light of this, it appears appropriate for us to state categorically that Mill's essay *On Liberty* is concerned with the issue of the nature and bounds of authority that society can rightfully use over an individual. While determining the limitations of the state's interference with individual liberty as well as the bounds of public opinion as a means of ensuring good citizenship, Mill suggests that a significant amount of authority be reserved for the people. His stern warning against the "tyranny of the majority" perfectly captures Mill's distinctive preoccupation in socio-political theory. Because of this, he claims that "the tyranny of the majority is now generally included among the evils against which society requires to be on its guard" (Mill, 1947:4). Hence, while there is a constant apprehension of tyranny in every type of governance, institutionalizing democratic processes and values is insufficient as a defense against it. According to Mill (Mill, 1947:4), "like other tyrannies, the tyranny of the majority...is still vulgarly held in dread, chiefly as operating through the acts of public authority." However, tyranny does not depend on what the government or other political figures do. Since society is the one that carries out its own mandate, tyranny may also appear in social activities. Therefore, the community engages in "social tyranny" whenever it issues an improper mandate or any mandate at all with which it should not intervene. This constitutes one of the primary causes of the current global crisis. This incorrect mandate may just be given despite having "good intentions" and may not be readily seen to be a bad mandate until a problem threatens and materializes. Considering Mill recognizes the inevitable presence of tyranny in every type of government run by men, his solution to the issue does not aim to completely remove tyranny from positions of power. Mill advocates "protection against all forms of tyranny" as opposed to the total eradication of tyranny. However, aware of the non-exhaustiveness and the implementation of tyranny in social matters, Mill identifies the domains in which protection against tyranny is necessary in order to defend liberty and open the door to the establishment of social harmony in the following words:

safeguarding against the tyranny of the magistrate alone is insufficient; safeguards must also be in place against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling; safeguards must be in place against society's propensity to impose its own standards of conduct on those who disagree with them through means other than civil penalties; safeguards must be in place to restrain the growth and, if possible, prevent the

formation of any individuality at odds with its ways;
and mandate that all characters conform
independently (Mill, 1947: 4- 4).

Setting a limit on how much "collective opinion" or the majority may lawfully interfere with the freedom of the individual people in a society is the task of offering a powerful defense against the tyranny of the majority. But where and how will the boundaries be set in human affairs? Because "all that makes existence valuable to anyone depends on the enforcement of restraints upon the actions of the people" (Mill, 1947: 5), Living together in a society, Mill recognizes that man, as a moral actor, has to be constrained in his actions. Such limits are made feasible by limiting man's freedom in order to control his behavior and ensure that he coexists peacefully with others in society. John Stuart Mill's "Harm Principle" is the foundational idea on which we will base our defense of the feasibility of his theory of liberty in the context of positive social interactions and societal harmony. For John Stuart Mill, the only justification for the state interfering with an individual's rights is to avoid harming others. Thus, Mill maintained that he developed *On Liberty* with the intention of establishing a single, fundamental concept that would serve as the basis for all future interactions between society and the individual. In accordance with this principle, only self-protection justifies an individual or group of individuals interfering with another individual's or group of individuals' right to pursue their own interests because the only legitimate reason to use authority over an individual or group of individuals against their will is to protect others from harm. More crucially, in Mill's view, denying someone their liberty is a tremendous evil. Either action or inactivity is used to carry out this deprivation of liberty. Mill's concept of liberty might be summed up as follows: (i) everyone should be required to act in a specific way toward other people. (ii) That the goal of this behavior should be to protect the interests of other people.

Mill's Harm Principle" and "Socio-political Relations

Humans are classified as social and political "animals" and make up the system of society. As a result, the concept of society always implies some form of social interaction. They become acquainted with the individual's place in society and the fact that accepting membership in a society or state implies accepting corresponding obligations through various political thinkers' theses on the origin, purpose, and nature of society. An individual's vitality needs social and political relationships, which might be friendly or tense. Lacks of integration, ethnic dominance, flawed socio-political structures, etc. are some of the causes of the absence of friendly socio-political connections among society's participants. Mutual trust and respect for one another's rights to privacy are prerequisites for social integration. In a multiethnic nation like Nigeria, the necessity for social integration is particularly crucial. Considering that "Nigeria is a land of contrasts" (Akinyele, 2001: 59), this is the case. Nigeria, according to Iwuchukwu (2001: 111), is "a confederation of diverse ethnic nationalities, each of which considers itself autonomous, self-conscious, and, to some extent,

independent." The issues of poverty and dominance are additional traits of Nigerian society. Nigeria is divided into dominant and minority groups while being a diverse nation. The three main ethnic groups that make up the overwhelming majority frequently display a sense of dominance and superiority over the minority ethnic groups, to the point where there are complaints of neglect and marginalization on the part of the latter, particularly given that the former has dominated the political and social scene of the nation since independence. Osuji (2018) states that the lack of a single national goal is a result of the leadership ideology being centered on ethnic interests and personal fortune. Since its inception, Nigeria's government structure has faced several difficulties, the majority of which are the result of ethnic politics and attitudes. In addition to other issues, Nigeria has been plagued by a number of ethnic, political, and economic crises (Olugbemi & Osuji, 2021). There are many different points of view about this. Some people attribute this issue to the British government's colonial rule over the country, while others attribute it to poor leadership (Bolarinwa & Osuji, 2022). As a result, the country has been split along ethnic lines, which has led to inequalities among the populace.

The government in Nigeria has not given the integration of ethnic minorities, which is a sign of national growth, considerable consideration. According to Iwuchukwu (2001), the majority of the actions taken to solve this issue have actually strengthened ethnicity rather than integrated it.

Nigeria began running a federal system of government in 1954, with three regions established in accordance with the country's three main ethnic groups: the north, southeast, and southwest. This structure was kept after the country gained independence in 1960 until the system was changed in 1963 and the fourth area was separated from the Southwestern region. The regions were split into four categories: Northern, Eastern, Western, and Mid-Western. The Republic of Biafra, under the leadership of Chukwumeke Ojukwu, attempted independence from the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1967 as a result of the fight against dominance. In order to pacify the minority, the Federal Military Government further divided Nigeria into twelve states. In some ways, this development rectified a glaring territorial imbalance that had been a significant contributor to political instability, but it also left behind the remnants of oppression and suffering that accelerated the pressure and agitation from various ethnic groups for local autonomy. As a result, the Federal Republic of Nigeria started to establish new states: 19 in 1976, 21 in 1987, 30 in 1991, and 36 in 1996. A variety of weak and financially unviable states that serve as conduits for the transfer of federal resources and services to local authorities were created as a result of the creation of states, despite the fact that this appeared to satisfy the demands of its proponents by granting some degree of local autonomy. This crisis was identified by Sklar (2002). The relationship between the Federal Government and its component sections became so strained⁹³ as a result of this development, which strengthened ethnic awareness (ethnocentrism), that the nation's unity was put in

jeopardy. Ethnocentrism is the "view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it," according to W.G. Sumner (1940: 13). Ethnocentrism manifests itself in society in a variety of forms, including "mythology, condescension, and a double standard of morality in social relations" (Noel, 1973: 20). Through mythology, the ethnic group relates myths of its tenacity, individuality, and superiority to other ethnic groups. The gang displays haughtiness as they justify their arrogance and treatment of others with contempt. According to Becker (1956), the concept of a double standard is a "dual ethnicity" one in which only transactions involving members of the same group are subject to the higher requirements. In-group exploitation, preferential treatment, rejection, or denigration of any out-group is therefore inherent consequences of ethnocentrism.

In contrast, "ethnocentrism in itself need not lead to either interethnic or ethnic stratification" (Noel, 1973: 21). In actuality, ethnocentrism is a universal quality shared by independent cultures or ethnic groupings. Competition between ethnic groups does not adequately explain why there is an ethnic crisis. Instead, crises arise when ethnocentrism engages in unhealthy rivalries and competitions in the face of unequal developmental opportunities and capacities, which frequently result in violent agitations, lawlessness, ethnic cleansing, usurpation of power, exploitation, oppression, and a stalling of societal advancement. There will only be two possibilities in such a situation: complete integration or dissolution. People in Nigeria, for instance, called for the convening of a sovereign national conference of all ethnic nationalities and other recognized groups to decide the fate of the ethnic groups' continued unity as a result of the problems among them. This essay encourages discussion along the lines of an independent national conference. But the nature of man as a human being needs to be taken more into account. Inter-group conflict that is motivated by animosity toward a certain ethnic group is unacceptable. It is common knowledge that Igbo people are distinct from Yoruba, Hausa, Tiv, and Edo people. While it is also possible for someone to reject supporting a specific move made by their ethnic group, it is not enough to say that they do not belong to any ethnicity. When there is marginalization, as there is in the case of Nigeria, interethnic relations might deteriorate. When social integration or interethnic coherence are lacking, this happens. Interethnic harmony or integration will, in fact, result in the creation of what Babawale (2003a: 66) refers to as "a super-national entity that would be superior to the multiple ethnicities and nationalities that proliferate the Nigerian State." It's likely that certain groups lack significant representation, which keeps their voices from being heard. Thus, Mill cautions us to beware of the tyranny of the majority, which frequently happens when some ethnic groups are not treated equitably in society's affairs. For Mill, either government action or inactivity can do harm to minorities. As most of us have seen in the Nigerian Niger Delta region, the government may use action to favor one part or ethnic group over another. The administration may choose to ignore the pleas of the people on issues impacting their affairs by remaining silent. In underdeveloped civilizations, both choices are common, particularly in Africa, where the populace is either exploited or

ignored. Mill's theory of liberty may be used to create government policies that do no harm to society in order to provide the foundation for good social relations and peace in these areas. In addition, Mill supports tolerance for differing viewpoints. Any contemporary administration that is indifferent to the cries of the people, to their desires, and to their citizens' interests is fostering crises. For instance, the Federal Government of Nigeria has been insensitive to public opinion, demonstrating its indifference to people's views and causing harm through inactivity. Even after democracy was established, the federal government's sensitivity to people's needs frequently led to catastrophic situations. In particular, ethnic conflicts the lack of political freedom in Nigeria contributes to ethnic conflict. According to Akinboye (2001: 161) and Babawale (2003a: 70), "the Ijaw and Itsekiri were locked in a protracted and grueling war over the location of Warri South Local Government Council" in the Niger Delta. Others in this category include the Ife-Modakeke conflict in South-West Nigeria (Babawale, 2003a), the Zango-Kataf crisis in North-Central Nigeria, the Umuleri and Aguleri in Nigeria's Anambra state, and the Tiv-Jukun dispute in Benue State over local elections. The institutionalization of liberalism, as suggested by Mill, is the solution to the issue of ethnic clashes in plural societies. Mill advocates freedom of expression and the free development of individuality, which are the necessary ingredients for social harmony and peace in a plural society like Nigeria. The existence of violent ethnic militias is a sign of oppression, deprivation, neglect, and a lack of inter-group cohesion or integration, we submit.

In accordance with Mill, they must refrain from acting in a way that may cause harm to others if we want to guarantee a happy relationship. The freedom of others must thus be considered in all of our social interactions. To John Stuart Mill, it is wrong to stifle free speech since doing so "robs the human race of its prosperity as well as that of the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion suffer more than those who hold it." If the view is correct, they are denied the chance to trade in mistake for truth. (Mill, 1947: 16). One must keep in mind that expressing one's opinion freely and managing one's thoughts are two very different things. The minority should have the opportunity to voice their ideas. Such minority views frequently contain information about their concerns and interests, which, if addressed in a timely manner, can prevent a crisis from erupting. For instance, if the research's theory had been accepted, the Niger Delta conflicts would have been prevented. If this paper's thesis had been true, the Modakeke/Ife catastrophe may also have been averted. A conscientious administration that has the requisite infrastructure responds to public agitation before crises become fully developed. This essay urges tolerance of opposing viewpoints in order to maintain social peace and harmony. Adopting this idea will undoubtedly eliminate or significantly minimize conflict in relationships between individuals, groups, states, and on a global scale.

Mill's Harm Principle and Religious Intergroup Relations

The basis of a harmonious relationship is tolerance. Intolerance is the primary cause of the majority of the world's issues today. But one could wonder, "What is intolerance?" There are several solutions to this query. One may respond that it is due to the prejudiced and egotistical nature of man or that some individuals believe they were made superior to everyone else. (For instance, the Israelites being the God-chosen race, Hitler's assertion that the German race was superior to other races, or the distinction between the white and the black races); or that some people have better physical characteristics than others; or that one way of living is right while all others are wrong; or because of competition for limited resources, etc. All of these reflect poor social interactions that are either driven by greed or ignorance. Sometimes, especially if the diversity of society is not taken into account, a social relationship may be built on weak foundations that may breed prejudice. The Fourth Republic of Nigeria Constitution (1999), for instance, states in its opening paragraph that:

We the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria having firmly and solemnly resolved: To live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble Sovereign Nation under God dedicated to promotion of inter-African solidarity, world peace, international co-operation and understanding; And to provide for a Constitution for the purpose of promoting good government and welfare of all persons in our country on the principles of Freedom, Equality and Justice, and for the purpose of consolidating the Unity of our people: do hereby make, enact and give to ourselves the following Constitution.

Normally, one could be tempted to think that this declarative phrase sums up the inhabitants of Nigeria's commitment and consent to be governed in accordance with the abovementioned constitution. However, this is far from the truth, since the entire proclamation reveals the hypocrisy of the "Founding Fathers" of the Constitution, therefore setting the groundwork for intolerance. First off, the statement "We the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria" gives the impression that the constitution was created by every Nigerian, but in fact it was prepared and enforced by the military administration without consulting the general populace. Consequently, the goal for which the constitution was created, as stated in the statement's second to final paragraph, "for the purpose of promoting good government and the welfare of all persons in our country on the principle of Freedom, Equality, and justice," is rejected. Second, although highlighted in the proclamation, the values of equality and freedom were not taken into consideration when crafting the constitution since not all groups in the nation were represented. Third, because Nigeria is a multi-religious country with a sizeable proportion of atheists whose views have no place in Nigeria, the term "Sovereign Nation under God" does not accurately describe Nigeria's religious diversity in God's honor. Crisis situations in Nigeria following the inauguration

of democracy are caused by these and other related issues resulting from poor planning and execution. Furthermore, the problem of intolerance among Nigerians has not been adequately addressed by the country's government. Even Nigeria's political actions have in some ways contributed to the growth of sectional differences and the associated intolerance among various segments of Nigerian society. For instance, in Nigeria's party politics, the leaders have sown the seeds of intolerance. Most political parties in Nigeria were founded along ethnic lines when the elective concept was introduced to the country's politics in 1922.

Herbert Macaulay established the NNDP, or Nigerian National Democratic Party, in 1923. This group was headquartered in Lagos. The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), under the leadership of Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe, came next in 1944. Both the Obafemi Awolowo-led Action Group for the Yoruba and the Ahmadu Bello-led Northern People's Congress (NPC), which was headquartered in the north, were established in 1951. Since then, Nigerian party formations have closely followed this pattern. In fact, some have contended that the country's later political parties are merely evolved versions of the original group of groups that introduced ethnic intolerance to Nigerian politics. In sectarian disputes, bigotry manifests itself more severely. Religion was supposed to bring about world peace and pleasure, but instead it has divided people, caused conflict, and torn the human race apart. This is due to intolerance toward different religions. In Nigeria, fanaticism and fundamentalism are the causes of religious intolerance. Momoh describes religious fanaticism as follows:

...the conviction of a follower that his or her own religion is the only one that God favors and, as a result, is superior to all others; as a token of gratitude to God for bestowing this exclusive privilege and superiority upon his or her own religion, the follower is willing to go to any lengths using all methods, whether civilized or primitive, peaceful or violent, to defend or impose their religion on others. A fanatic may not have particularly deep knowledge or understanding of his own faith, incidentally. The fanatic has an external focus (Momoh, 2003: 37).

According to Fayemi (2002), a "born-again" Christian president is fueling a rise in Christian fundamentalism, which is why sharia is taking root in Nigeria. He claims that both fundamentalist Muslims and orthodox Christians are becoming increasingly concerned about the emergence and spread of Pentecostal Christianity as a significant social and political force in Nigeria. In addition, some people think that Christians have now adopted the present administration as their own version of God's government. The issue is that this particular Pentecostal movement is virulently hostile to Islam and is fanatical and bigoted. In Nigeria's Muslim community, this has really caused friction. Many Christians nowadays are more confident and outspoken, and it would seem that this has caused some unease in the Muslim community, especially when preachers publicly label

opponents as "anti-Christ and anti-religious" individuals who wish to topple God's appointed kingdom. As stated by Momoh (2003), certain Nigerian Christians and Muslims have formal institutionalized platforms through which they appear to stoke the flames of conflict, extremism, intolerance, and prejudice. Therefore, he asserts that the JNI and the CAN (Northern Zone) are Nigeria's two primary propagandists for religious prejudice and intolerance. The Muslim Council is led by fairly tolerant and rational figures who occasionally try to rein in Christian excesses. Both Muslims and Christians preach in inflammatory and offensive ways on radio, television, and in public. Worse still is the notion of blaring speeches and preaching in mosques and churches, which frequently demonize opponents. Religious intolerance is demonstrated at work locations, at home in job situations, in educational settings, and in the majority of human concerns. So what is the answer to this issue? For Momoh (1994 and 2003), conversation, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence are preferable to dealing with religious issues. For him as well, tolerance is not the same as toleration (Momoh, 2003), but may be found in Naretism," which is "The belief that every religion has soul-saving teachings that ought to be spread both formally and informally in order to support a society where there are many different religions.

But only a mentality that shuns catastrophes can flourish in serenity. A world order must be established in which nations and national groups are so content with their living conditions that they will not feel compelled to use the desperate expedient of war, as von Mises (2001) notes, if peace is not to be disturbed. All incentives for aggression must be removed. According to von Mises, the liberal's goal is to establish the social circumstances that will eradicate the causes of war, not to end it by moralizing and preaching. We consider the institutionalization and promotion of tolerance to be one of these requirements. Additionally, this supports Mill's theory. As a result, there will be harmony in society if religion is seen as a private matter. Except in cases when a religion's practice causes harm to others, it is improper for the government of a plural society to get involved in religious affairs. The pursuit of religious harmony is related to Mill's stress on free speech, tolerance of disagreement, and the free development of personality. In every social interaction, the ability to objectively see people is crucial because it allows one to recognize the humanity in those they must interact with. Negative acts and crises are the outcomes of negative perception. A phenomenological attitude known as "objective perception" promotes judgment free from prejudice and preconception. No religion should be seen as superior in order to prevent crises. In particular, "Mill's Harm Principle" provides remedies for Nigeria's religious issues. According to First Mill, there should be a distinction between concerns pertaining to private and public affairs. The person enjoys complete freedom over matters that are considered private issues, such as their religious convictions, so long as they do not cause harm to other people. Second, Mill suggests that in order to assess whether our acts may cause harm to others, we need to consider the repercussions of our decisions in advance. Thirdly, any such conduct that endangers others must be under control. Ultimately, given that there are several perspectives on the truth, rejecting a view out of hand because it is

presumptively wrong implies that the certainty of that opinion equates to absolute certainty (Mill, 1947). Therefore, in order to prevent religious crises, tolerance of various religious views is required, especially in multi-religious states.

According to Mill (1947: 8), "Religious freedom has hardly ever been practically realized, except where religious indifference, which dislikes having its peace disturbed by theological quarrels, has added its weight to the scale," as intolerance is "so natural to mankind in whatever they really care about." The unpleasant rivalry between religious sects, organizations, and denominations is a result of the followers' intolerance. It has been said that religion is a "contagious malady" and that only those who are insane can truly comprehend and appreciate the delight that only being crazy can bring. This is due to the fact that everyone looks to be irrational in their conviction, and as they cling to it as the sole truth, those who do not have the same religion as them are viewed as unbelievers, sinners, or outcasts. This is typically one of the reasons for social crises involving religion. This contention, however, does not seek to eradicate religion in the manner of Marx and his friends; rather, it promotes tolerance as a necessary precondition for avoiding religious crises of the kind that accompanied the implementation of the Shari'a legal system in several northern regions of Nigeria. This fundamental requirement is based on tolerance for various religious sects. To achieve this, legislation should forbid any tactics that might incite one faith against another in society.

Conclusion

It is obvious that positive social relationships lead to peace in society, while negative interactions lead to crises. The excessive exercise of freedom, the lack of a means to exercise freedom, and the arbitrary imposition of restrictions on people's freedom in one or more areas of shared interest within that particular society can all be summed up as the causes of unhealthy social relations in that society. For instance, crises are unavoidable when people are denied the economic liberty to which they are entitled or when their political rights are restricted. Furthermore, the lack of tolerance among their adherents is what fuels the toxic rivalry amongst religious factions, sects, organizations, and denominations. This is typically one of the reasons for social crises involving religion. Instead of destroying religion like Marx and his contemporaries did, we want to promote tolerance as a necessity for averting religious crises in society.

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