

THE LIMITS TO SEXUAL EQUALITY, SOCIAL PRACTICE AND NATION BUILDING

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Abstract

At this 21st century, it is the candid opinion of great section of humanity that the world has made a giant stride in its affirmative actions against various forms of discrimination on the basis of sex, gender and race. The crusade against sexual inequality, for example, has so advanced that to speak a different tongue is to be seen as not fully brought into the train of modern civilization or at best not enlightened. Indeed, this consciousness has done a great deal in correcting inadequate socialization and obvious marginalization. But if we are also fair enough, we would notice that a lot of things have gone the wrong way in terms of social practice and nation building because some issues have not been properly addressed. Though some gaps have closed up in many ways, especially in terms of rights, equal treatment and insertion into the mainstream socio-political life, women have not felt their natural ease and families have suffered the worst blows ever leaving nations so devastated. All these issues arise because we have misunderstood the respects in which men and women are said to be equal and what social roles nature in all its wisdom has endowed various sexes. This article is therefore set to appraise the milestones the present age has arrived in correcting some imbalances in the social practice of mankind, and then points out the right perspective of sexual equality and roles which would contribute meaningfully to better humanity and nation building.

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Introduction

It is a common knowledge that at this 21st century, the world has actually gone very far in its affirmative actions against various forms of discrimination on the basis of sex, gender and race. The crusade against sexual inequality, for example, has gone virile that to speak a different tongue is to be seen as not fully brought into the train of modern civilization or at best not enlightened. No doubt, this consciousness has done a great deal in correcting inadequate socialization and obvious marginalization. But if we are also fair enough, we would notice that a lot of things have torn apart with implications on social practice and nation building and this is because, there are some issues that have not been properly addressed. Though some gaps have closed up in many ways, especially in terms of rights, equal treatment and insertion into the mainstream socio-political life, women have given up their natural order and families have suffered its own blows to the point that the nations experience great difficulties. All these issues arise because we have misunderstood the respects in which men and women are said to be equal and what social roles nature in all its wisdom has endowed various sexes. This article is therefore set to appraise the milestones the present age has arrived in correcting some imbalances in the social practice of mankind, and points out the right perspective of equality and roles which would contribute meaningfully to better humanity and nation building.

Sexism in Human History:

For centuries, the differences between men and women had been socially defined and often distorted through a lens of sexism in which men assumed superiority over women and maintained it through domination. From ancient times till the contemporary era, the subjugation of women had been so universal and pervading. In the Greek cultural world, variety of explanations equating women with a phenomena to be transcended in the name of historical progress were so proliferated. There were claims that the emotion and sexuality linked with the female were perceived as a threat to the polis and again their closeness to biological rhythms associated with birth and death represented a transitional process that threatened the Greek desire for permanence, independence and autonomy. All these characterisation about women were meant to socially demarcate them from the world's historical progress. In most of the Greek cities they were placed in a position of decided inferiority. Legally, they had no right to hold property or to plead in court and had restricted rights to initiate lawsuits. These sexists' attitudes and misconceptions about women were all influenced by the mythic literatures of the very early Greek period, encapsulated in the notable poems of Homer and Hesiod where women were painted in devastating images.

One had expected that the philosophers of the time would have set the right perspective about this state of affair. As we know, the Western political philosophy which first flourished in Athens in the 4th century BC had the names of Plato and Aristotle most frequently associated with its origin. The answers given by these philosophers on the nature of women and their participation in the social scheme of life had echoed down the centuries. Plato's pronouncements on the subject have influenced some thinkers in the later times and quite recently the world's social practice, even beyond the function he actually ascribed to women in the second-best state. This is despite the fact that one of the two women who attended his academy had to disguise herself in men's attire in order to facilitate acceptance in the academy. But Aristotle's powerful association with women of certain

qualities viewed as antithetical to politics, and even to civilisation itself has remained the reference point for the successive and steady derogatory ideas about them and their consequent subjugation in the states across the ages.

Aristotle sees the nature of men and women to be totally different requiring therefore different functions. His concept of the inherent psychological inferiority of women was matched by his belief that women differed fundamentally from men in their physiological characteristics and social competence. Based on the human soul, Aristotle believes that women, like men, are capable of virtues and understanding but these are not of the same quality and strength in both. For Aristotle (1990:1260a) “the temperance of a woman and that of a man are not the same, nor their courage and justice, as Socrates thought, but the one is the courage of command, and the other that of subordination, and the case is similar with the other virtues”. In other words, Aristotle sees a difference even in that which is similar to them: “A man would be thought a coward if he were only as brave as a woman and a woman a chatterer if she were only as modest as a good man” (1277b). He leaves no doubt about the subordinate nature of female to male: “As between the sexes, the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, and male ruler and female subject. And the same must also necessarily apply in the case of mankind generally” (1254b).

Aristotle (1943) designates in his work, *Generation of Animal* the male as possessing the principle of movement and generation, the female as possessing that of matter; i.e. the soul comes from the male while the body from the female. In other words, the contribution which the female makes to generation is the matter, semen which comes from the male possesses the principle of ‘form’. He regards the male as the norm whereas the female he considered an ‘infertile male’, a ‘deformity’ identified by an ‘inability of a sort’ (766a).

In the medieval, Aquinas (1964) tried in *Summa Theologiae* to make a unified synthesis of the ancient and medieval thought, and in this exercise, he was explicitly Aristotelian. He completely reintroduced the Aristotelian ideas of women’s natural inferiority through the notion of hierarchy in which the more rational ruled the more material and so the claims regarding inequality. Aquinas reaffirmed the Aristotelian account of generation wherein he claimed that female, as the more passive partner plays a lesser role, and that the reproduction of new females is the result of inferior process. He remarked however that this does not imply that their being was by mistake. No, it effectively follows the divine order and purpose; they are purposely made as man’s helpmate with a nature that is quite specific. According to him, “it was absolutely necessary to make a woman for the reason Scripture mentions, as a help for man; not indeed to help in any other work as some have mentioned, because where most work is concerned man can get help more conveniently from another man than from a woman, but to help him in the work of procreation” (1994:1a.92). He points out here that woman is only valuable with regard to procreation but which of course is not the only end of humanity. To humanity, there is a vital operation nobler than generation and this, women cannot fulfil.

On another level, Aquinas stressed an equality of souls in the spiritual realm beyond sexual identity. In matters pertaining to soul, he said, woman ‘does not differ from man as to the thing’. God’s image is found in both man and woman as regards that point in which the idea of ‘image’ is principally realised, namely an intelligent nature. Yet, unable to surmount his innate prejudice over woman’s inferiority, Aquinas added immediately that secondarily, God’s image is found in man in a way in which it is not found in woman; for man is the beginning and end of woman, just as God is the beginning and end of all creature (1994:1a.93). It is on this point that G. Lloyd (1984:6) commented saying: Aquinas accepted that women might achieve rational, hence spiritual equality, yet he thought it again unlikely referring to them as incontinent, vacillating, a prey to passion and defective in reason. For Aquinas, ‘the human group would have lacked the benefit of order had some of its members not been governed by others who were wiser. Such is the subjection in which woman is by nature subordinate to man, because the power of rational discernment is by nature stronger in man (1994:1a.92). That was the situation of women that since after Aquinas reintroduction of the Aristotelian view of natural sexual distinction, the history of philosophy on the nature of women and equality had been till some part of the modern era a notion of inferiority and subordination to men.

There were glimpses of sexual equality of men and women in the modern era like in the famous work of John Stuart Mill, *The Subjugation of Women*, but that was much later in this epoch. Before then, it was a thorough sexism. In the *Leviathan* Hobbes (1962) affirmed in his early formation of the commonwealth that there is not always that difference of strength or prudence between man and woman as that the right cannot be determined without war. But this idea was again overturned by his innate prejudices and sexism. Although in the state of nature both sexes potentially have the ‘strength or prudence’ to triumph, Hobbes later thinks this to be unlikely. For him, males are at an advantage: ‘Men are naturally fitter than women, for actions of labour and danger’ (195). And in his *Elements of Laws*, Hobbes (1939) conceded men again greater points of wisdom and courage.

If in Hobbes there was ambivalence with regard to sexual inequality, Jean Jacques Rousseau was quite precise in his distinction. Civic equality is not only contrary to nature but stands at society’s peril. Like Aristotle, Rousseau (1911) defined virtues and functions according to sexes and advised that females be trained for their particular role in manner quite distinct from males. He believes that by nature men ought to rule women and the reason is found in the defective problem associated with women’s reproductive role. According to Rousseau, female’s sexual function suffuse her entire existence, it, rather than her humanity, defines her. For, while a male

is only a male now and again, the female is always a female or at least all her youth; everything reminds her of her sex. She lacks the right sort of reason, autonomy and judgement to make any impartial assessment of the public good. For him therefore, women's right is not to be free and equal but to win love and respect through obedience and fidelity (324).

Again, like Aristotle, Hegel (1967) attributes to women a defective and immature rationality which expressly excludes them from politics. He deduced from his system their lesser rationality in such a way that the difference between men and women is fundamental and immutable. In man Hegel said, the mind is split: it experiences and self-consciously reflects upon that experience. It is this capacity for conceptual thinking that grants the male access to universality and real freedom; that is why they alone make history, for they alone engage in politics and learning. Manhood comes not as a biological given but as the successful outcome of a struggle which emulates reason's development. On the other hand, women are passive and subjective, not reflective and self-conscious; their feelings and experiences are unified, they love and intuit in the manner most suited to family life. They lack the universal faculty that would allow them access to the Ideal –to science, philosophy and art. For this reason then, he suggests that women be confined to the family with its immature rationality and ethical status (114).

Women/Feminists Intervention in History

Feminism is an organ, a conscious political movement through which women have made their voice known in history. It arose in England in the 17th century to contend for the reorganisation of sexual difference and division, and thus the social meaning of womanhood. The underlying demand of feminism is that woman be fully incorporated into humanity; it sought for the equality of mankind as its goal.

Women had been so much oppressed throughout the course of history on the basis of the deepening sexual differences. As has been shown in our preceding treatment, history had been one long death-knell on women's independent activity and consciousness. It was like a conspiracy among men to keep women perpetually in subordination through deepening description of sexual difference and consequent inequality. The sexes may be different, women admitted, but why can't that difference be represented throughout culture, without the sex that is different becoming subordinated? It is like if the world had been created or the humanity had been formed only according to male psyche so that whatever does not conform to that norm is not human. And as humans they have been given the powers to subjugate all other creatures including women, who must be excluded from all the activities of the human-male.

About the Aristotelian claim which was taken over by subsequent philosophers saying that it is by certain incapacity that the female is female, a defect in reason, the feminists leave the onus on the modern era to prove by measurement that there is a physiological defect in women's mind. The power of reason, they say, is the mark of mankind's superiority over the beasts; if women were deficient in it, it could be explained by means like educational and social opportunities which they had always been excluded from taking part in. The human reason is the same, there are many women who are more intelligent than many men, vice versa, and there are 'many women who surpass many men in many things', Plato would say. According to R. H. Tawney (1931:49):

If a man be exalted by reason of any excellence in his soul, he may please to remember that all souls are equal, and their differing operations are because their instrument is in better tune, their body is more healthful or better-tempered; which is no more praise to him than it is that he were born in Italy.

If reason therefore, is the condition for entry into the conquest of history, women cannot 'be left out in this pursuit, each according to the degree of her capacity just like men. To do otherwise, would involve one into serious injustice and inconsistency. M. Wollstonecraft (1929:11) challenged the exclusion of women thus: "If women are to be excluded without having a voice from a participation of the natural rights of mankind, prove first, to ward off the charge of injustice and inconsistency, that they want reason?" Still on the same logic but with regard to the denial of empowering opportunities for the participation in the social and political history of nations, J.S. Mill (1970) asked: 'If human beings should be free to develop their faculties as they see fit, and not chained down by an inexorable bond to the place they are born to, then how with consistency could you deny this to women?' Are women not human beings? Mill considered as bad the principle underlying the deepening sexual inequality as one of the obstacles that has continued to impede human development:

...the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes –the legal subordination of one sex to the other –is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human development (219).

The truth of this is not far-fetched when we think of the United Nations Millennium Campaign (2008) of ending world poverty by 2015 to be founded on establishing gender equality. The project claims: "Every single Goal is directly related to women's rights, and societies where women are not afforded equal rights as men can never achieve development in a sustainable manner." Gender equality is seen therefore as a condition to greater economic prosperity. That is why the same United Nations in their 2008 sponsored report warned the Arab world that deny equality of opportunity to women insisting that this disempowerment is a critical factor crippling their return to the first rank of global leaders in commerce, learning and culture

We recall also that this was one of the chief reasons for Plato's argument in calling women out to participate in all of human endeavours, because women who constituted one half of the human race were continually being wasted due to Greek prejudice of female inferiority. He was convinced that just as male and female sheep dogs are equally responsible for guarding the flock, so female and male rulers will guard the city, protect it in war and rule it in peace. Plato (1987) did not discount that some differences exist between men and women but they share the same nature in essence, in diversity and homogeneity of natural abilities:

We did not posit likeness and difference in nature in any and every sense, but were paying heed solely to the kind of diversity and homogeneity that was pertinent to the pursuits themselves. We meant, for example, that a man and a woman who have a physician's mind have the same nature (454c).

In speaking of equality Plato brings out therefore the fact that human abilities or natural capacities for leadership, athletics, music, dancing, for example, can be found in men as well as in women, though these vary in degree among them, much as it is the case even among men. Consequently, women ought to participate in all forms of public life, and must be helped to actualise these natural abilities. Both men and women are human beings, and if what distinguishes them from other animals is their rational soul, it is no less rational soul in woman than it is in man. 'In his image he created them, male and female he created them.' (Gen. 1:28). In fact, giving women use of their potential in diversified occupations of interest and choice not only doubles the mental faculties at humanity's service, but also stimulates men's own intellects by the additional competition.

The feminists' contention is that the distinguishing mark of humanity is their rational soul and it is equal in either of the species; all other social and psychological differences between the sexes are culturally constructed to advance the male agenda of sexual inequality. The only important difference, they admit, not accounted by culture is 'procreation', the ability to menstruate, give birth and lactate. This is the original and the only difference that is the basis of the oppression of women, a difference which has little if any behavioural and psychological relevance. In other words, they seemed to reject such idea as expressed by M. Konner (1982), "that after sexism is wholly stripped away, after differences in training have gone the way of the whalebone corset, there will still be something different, something that is grounded in biology".

Feminists reject the notion that biology has a role in social history and refuse all the social and cultural restraints imposed or assumed by women in virtue of their mammalian reproductive system. To fight against this, many maintain that though it is a biological condition that women should bear children, it is not a social dogma that mothers should rear them. It is due to the domestic responsibilities which consume all their time and energy that women have neither leisure nor motivation to pursue leadership roles, a condition that extends also to their lack of the opportunity to express their intellectual and artistic abilities. To achieve its goals of sexual equality therefore, they suggest like Plato, a radical change in the institution of marriage and family. Some of them even think of introducing an artificial reproduction.

Plato's solution for reproduction virtually eliminated gender by making disappear all the functions and qualities associated with women. The mother-child bond is to be broken and women's fertility controlled by a rigorous regulation of sexual contact and hence pregnancy. The natural world of fertility was to be brought firmly within the ambit of reason, and women's power is consequently demystified, rationalized. The Kibbutz movement in Israel founded in 1910 had practically implemented this type of revolution. It is a society which intended among other objectives, to bring about a crucial change in the life of women—a system of sexual equality in the 'identity' sense like Plato.

The most affirmative way however, by which women have demonstrated their claim to sexual equality had been their presence in the world's socio-political stage. Evelyn Fox Keller (2000:386) indicated this that the one area of hope where the prospect of equality had shown a realizable signal had been the change in women's new form of confidence and entry into the political scene as well as many other areas of learning: "To those women who continue to feel beleaguered, it is a matter of considerable interest that there are some areas in which the promise of full gender equity actually appears as a realizable goal. Developmental biology (like primatology) is a prominent example. The marks of success are not simply to be found in numbers, although numbers do tell part of the story, but in the status and visibility of women and, perhaps above all, in the public display of a new kind of confidence". She talks about how a significant number of women now head major laboratories in the field of developmental biology and comprise over one third of the membership of professional societies, and almost as high a proportion of the papers presented at major conferences. Today, the novelty of women occupying intellectual space and position of authority but more importantly, their ability to publicly inhabit that authority and to present themselves with a kind of assurance and self-confidence which in the past was only seen in male scientist, is a thing of great hope.

Women are showing these days that biological difference is not contrary to socio-political activities although it can account to a point, some differences in accomplishment in relation to men. The modern female parliamentarians, ministers, prime ministers, heads of state like the former presidents of Indonesia, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Georgia, Australia; other great women like Margaret Thatcher, Elisabeth Tudor, Mary-Theresa of Austria, Victoria, Benazir Butho and Edith Cresson who showed no sign of difference in the way they ruled, or the present president of Brazil, the German chancellor Angela Merkel etc. who despite their different biology

discharge their public duties well and display aptitude for statesmanship, shows that the issue of women's 'reproduction' in the face of social political functions should not be over-exaggerated. Stephen Gould (1981:324) tells us that "we are inextricably part of nature, but human uniqueness is not negated thereby". Only for animals, he said, is the statement "created in God's own image" fallacious. He maintains that "it is not mere hubris to argue that *Homo Sapiens* is special in some sense... The impact of human uniqueness upon the world has been enormous because it has established a new kind of evolution to support the transmission across generations of learned knowledge and behavior".

National/International Efforts at Sexual Equality and Social Practice

There have been national as well as international efforts in assuring gender equality in the world. It began with the late 19th century suffragette movement especially in the Western countries which sought to allow women to vote and hold elective posts. It took a long journey before this became a general practice in the world at large. Also, to a large extent there have been changes on women's property rights especially as it concerns their marital status, thanks to the Married Women's Property Act 1882. In many cultures, Igboland inclusive, married women who wish to retain their maiden surname within their married homes do so and no longer allow be swallowed up in the patriarchal mentality. Some women tie the two surnames together to indicate a new form of identity.

A number of gender equality principles have been enshrined in the various regional, continental and international instruments on human and women's rights, such as the African Platform for Action (1994), the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW - 1979), the African Plan of Action to Accelerate the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action for the Advancement of Women (1999); the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003); the principle of gender equality in Article 4 (I) of the Constitutive Act of the African Union.

All the above and many other actions had been part of the continental and international commitments to fight various forms of discrimination against women arising from sex differences and consequent sexual inequalities. In the European Union, for instance, all Articles of *Directive* 2004/113/EC have been incorporated into Law on Equal Treatment between Men and Women as regards the Access to and Supply of Goods and Services No. 18(I)/2008. Lack of access to employment and job promotion against women is deemed as sexual harassment and is subjected to *Directive*. The *Directive* 2002/73/EC on equal treatment which amended the *Council Directive* 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training, promotion, and working conditions states that: "Harassment and sexual harassment within the meaning of this Directive shall be deemed to be discrimination on the grounds of sex and therefore prohibited."

A lot of changes have also taken place through the adoption of affirmative action policies; i.e. positive discrimination policies aimed at providing special opportunities for, and favouring members of a disadvantaged group who suffer from discrimination. Some countries use the quota system like is the case in Nigeria especially in many respects of its education policy, certain percentage of jobs and school vacancies reserved for women or some other considerations affecting regions. There have also been changes in social views, including 'equal pay for equal work'. Europe has been very consistent in promoting this and almost all the countries in the EU had already enshrined the principle in their constitutions. It is even the key principle named in the formation of European Union in 1957. Here, Article 141 of the Treaty of Rome says 'each Member State shall ensure that the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value is applied.' Very recently women had complained they were not paid equally with men at Tennis competition in spite of playing two sets and men three. That notwithstanding, an accord has been reached in which they receive equal pay in similar competitions.

In many cultures of the world, most especially in Nigeria, girls were never given educational opportunity on the grounds that it never advanced the family fortunes; above all that it is useless in respect of the domestic role they assume later in life. Today we have a Universal Declaration of Human Rights which asserts the principle of non-discrimination and proclaims that every person has the right to education. This was adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on 14 December 1960, which entered into force on 22 May 1962. Changes in attitudes to equality in education opportunities for boys and girls have really undergone a cultural shift. Indeed, in most universities in Nigeria, the numerical strength of the girls and women are overwhelming in spite of the cost of education.

Other changes in the social views include the fact that most occupations have now been made equally available to men and women, in many countries. For example, many countries now permit women to serve in the armed forces, police forces and other paramilitary profession, --occupations which in the past were traditionally reserved for men. No doubt, these professions continue to be male dominated, but there are now an increasing number of women active in these jobs, and more prominently in the fields of politics as well as business positions. In a similar development, men have become increasingly involved in those jobs which previous generation had seen as belonging to women's sphere and thereby breaking the myth associated with biological differences by which men are meant for conquest of the outer world, and women the drudgery of domesticity. It is part of the

social practice then that men are involved in jobs such as nursing, cleaning, cooking, hair-dressing etc. They participate more closely in the activities related to child bearing and child rearing which were widely considered before as belonging exclusively to women. In this way, women are free to pursue their career after marriage and similarly after childbirth. In some cases, the couple limits their number of issue to one for the aforesaid purpose.

Evaluation and Suggestions for Nation Building

From all we have seen, it is certainly clear that the goal of equality between men and women is growing much closer but we are also losing our awareness of important differences. The vision of equality between the sexes has narrowed the possibilities for discovery of what truly exists within a man and within a woman. I think it is not out of purpose that God created all living animals in pairs of male and female. The world is less interesting when everything is same. Each being has its own colour to bring into that beautiful rainbow of existence. All we need to do is to appreciate each colour and its beauty without necessarily making comparisons of value, otherwise one sex may end up giving up its natural orientation in an effort to acquire or assume the other sexual role which appears to gain wider acceptance and relevance. Every sexual role is relevant and essentially important. We need to revalue those qualities that have been traditionally devalued especially the values associated with the 'feminine' –attributes such as cooperation, empathy, and holism.

As one of those feminist psychologists whose work resonates with the above perspective and experiences, Carol Gilligan (1982) argued that women "speak in different voice" when it comes, for instance, in moral reasoning; that women as a group bring a distinctive perspective (a "voice" or "way of knowing") to their intellectual practices. This must be appreciated and considered necessary in the intellectual world much equally as the universal approach through which men as a group come into moral reasoning. Both sexes open up for us varieties of understanding of the same thing or different facets of the same reality. Edit Stein (1959) finds women's biologically based characteristic towards concrete approach to life and lesser tendency to aggressiveness to be even greater motive that they be subsumed in every aspect of social and public functions. This is so because in a matter of elaborating a law or decrees, for instance, men often run the risk of disregarding the concrete conditions of life as they attempt to reach a perfect legal form, whereas women in general, whether in the Parliament or in the administrative services, will be motivated towards concrete ends and thus would be of great advantage to men. Thus, by having access to the multiple professions of mankind, women would contribute immensely to the totality of mankind's social life.

In our age of philosophical pluralism, we know that reality is more than one and again there is not one consistent means of approaching truths about the world, but rather many. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1958) in his notion of language-games, for instance, argues that there is no overarching, single, fundamental ontology, but only a patchwork of overlapping interconnected ontologies ineluctably leading from one to another. Discussing 'number', for instance, as a technical vocabulary and as it is generally used in language he said:

"All right: the concept of 'number' is defined for you as the logical sum of these individual interrelated concepts: cardinal numbers, rational numbers, real numbers *etc.*;" ... — it need not be so. For I *can* give the concept 'number' rigid limits in this way, that is, use the word 'number' for a rigidly limited concept, but I can also use it so that the extension of the concept is *not* closed by a frontier. ...Can you give the boundary? No. You can *draw* one..." (68).

What Wittgenstein suggests is that it is not possible to identify a single concept which underlies all versions of 'number', but that there exists many interconnected meanings that move one to another; vocabulary therefore need not be restricted to technical meanings to be useful, and indeed technical meanings are 'exact' only within some proscribed context. What all these mean is that the characters associated with male or female must be seen as various and equally important shades of human reality complementing that reality and without which that reality is incomplete. In this way, our nation shall be richly endowed with various levels of contributions arriving from both sexes rather than push the female sex out from the political order because of their peculiar vision and manner of participation in the world's historical conquest. Or alternatively, make them abandon their natural disposition in the quest of the otherwise valued male vision and confrontation with the world. The male and female sexes are different and with their attendant attributes, but they can be valued equally. Women must be encouraged to live according as nature disposes them in whatever orientation they feel the inner call to contribute to the growth of the nation.

Indeed, it is not a spacious statement to say that men and women are equal but still different. We are irrevocably united in the idea that men and women are equal in the sense that they are both human; they have a right to equal opportunity and protection under the law: opportunity for education, social and political engagements, rights to properties etc. The fact that men and women in Nigeria, for instance, are assured these rights does not negate nevertheless, the fact that they are as different psychologically as they are physically. The physical difference between men and women is not only real but tangible; they are very obvious and most of these can be easily measured. The differences in terms of weight, structure, size and anatomy are not political or cultural opinions but can be seen and easily measured. The brain sizes of the boys, for instance, have been shown to be generally bigger than those of girls. The psychological difference that women can focus on more than one problem

at one time and frequently prefer to solve problems through multiple activities at a time is not also debated. But these differences whether physical or psychological, provide functional advantages and survival values to the human family and should be equally appreciated by our society so that our society might be enriched by these values and thus enhance her growth and beauty. The space of participation is open to all, and each person contributes especially from that point where he/she has a special advantage.

It is good to note that our biological heritage makes it impossible to bring into being any form of ideal society where all are said to be equal in identical way, even when the soul is the same. Our society should be arranged in such a way as to grant equal opportunity to female group who feel the inner call to participate in the pursuit of history. But this is not to be seen in the mathematical sense of equality of representation. There is a degree to which our biological nature makes it impossible, and as long as there is no heroic measure in these natures, even with identical education for both sex groups and equal access to all professions, men are likely to maintain disproportionate representation in political life, business and science. In other words, there should be according to Wilson (1978:135), a “modest predisposition” toward the sex-role inequities, which are an “inconvenient and senseless residue” of our biological legacy.

In the *Republic*, Plato wanted to insert everybody into the same bowl, disregarding individual identities, uniqueness and limits. He thought that the same thing must be achieved by women just the same way as men do. Women must not contribute in the same way as men do. Today we see women refusing to bear children or giving up their few months old babies to nursery care in utter pursuit of career. They tend to sacrifice their feminine order to the world of work. This is not the best way to contribute to the common wealth, help to build the nation. For they not only deprive the world that special care which nature endowed them, but they also strangulate themselves. Stein (1959) indicated to us the special tune of women’s body towards what is personal or concrete. She opined that on account of the unity of her body with the soul, the “intimacy” as Gilligan and Kolberg would assert, woman is linked in a more sensible way to the child and so finds in the procreation an important aspect of her life and function. Her strength is in the intuitive grasp of the living, inner world of others. Feeling, Stein said, is woman’s special gift. Only a person who is blinded by passion for polemics could deny the evident fact that the body and soul of the woman have been formed for particular ends, to be mothers of men.

However, because not all women are destined to perform the same role, and because even those who are mothers can still enter the political and social sphere later, the social exigency of their presence in the public services demand therefore that women’s education be global, liberal and professional in order to prepare them for the work-world, whether they actually enter it or not. We should seek sexual equality but not in terms of “identity” rather in terms of ‘equivalence’. In this way, we shall be equally contributing positively in the nation building.

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