

# **Man: A Community Being**



**Man:**  
**A Community Being**

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First Published 2020

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**Cover Design Image: Affam Arts**

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Printed By Black Belt Konzult Ltd.

# DEDICATION



*To lovers of peace, harmony and  
community sharing*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



**W**hen I look back at my life and the journey so far, I know that it is only God who made it possible for me to be. The uncreated creator and the unmoved mover, it can only be you. Thank you dear Lord for your love, direction, protection, inspiration and guidance which you bestowed on me to write this book.

My special thanks goes to my religious family, the New Evangelization Sisters of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. To the Superior General, Rev Sr. Justina Nwaobi, I acknowledge your motherly encouragement and prayers.

To my wonderful parent, Late Chief Joseph and Ezinne Nwereugwu Cecilia Asikaogu, you were great. May God rest your Souls Amen. To

my siblings Nephew and Nieces and entire family members. Thank you for your love, care, support, encouragement. Thank you for being there for me always, words cannot express what I feel. May God bless , reward and keep you all.

I thank very sincerely my friends, Prof Oparaobi, Mrs. Emilia Nwaokoro, Mrs. Odumah, Mrs. Oliobi, Mrs. Edith Abuchi, (*ife di mma*). Rev. Srs. Cythnia Oliagba, Vincent Okafor, Uche Onuorah, Rosemary Okolie. You all are wonderful. Thank you so much for your prayers and support.

My special thanks goes to our father founder Most Rev. Dr. A. O. Gbuji, Bishop Emeritus of the Catholic Diocese of Enugu for fatherly love, direction and prayers. In the same vein, I thank Rev. Frs. Maxcellanius Nwaolisa, Rev. Fr. Prof Christopher Ogunyemi, Rev. Fr. Dr. Hygenius Ezebuilo, Rev. Fr. Peter Okeke, Fr. Mancha Zi. Rev. Fr. Chris Ohemesi, Fr. Mezie. Thank you all for your Love, support and prayers.

I cannot forget to appreciate Mr Chinedu Ndumechim, a friend and a brother. I thank you in a special way for your support and may God bless you abundantly.

My immense gratitude goes to Rev Fr. Theophilus Ndulue, the Director of St Paul Institute of Evangelization Emene (SPIEE) All the students, past and present and the Lecturers. I appreciate the work we are doing together. The work of evangelization is a continuous process. My love for you all is priceless.

## FOREWORD



**M**an is a being – with – others. He is a rational being. Man has, therefore, the vertical and horizontal relationship. Vertically, he relates to God his Creator and horizontally he relates to others. Man as community being is an interesting piece by **Rev. Sr. Joannes Asikaogu (NES)**. She x-rays the subject matter which is man-transcendental being. In his social community nature, man realizes his own being in being – with others.

Man as a community being speaks laud of Thomas Merton that “No man is an island”. We need one another and in being with others, man obtain holistic healing – physical, psychological and spiritual healing.

I recommend everyone who is a lover of wisdom to take a look at this work. It is a *sine qua non* for a person who seeks maturity.

**Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Benjamin N. Eze**

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## INTRODUCTION



The human being cannot live or exist without the other persons. He or she lives among others of his own species. They live in society and equally survive with some degree of co-operation. “Man is a social being. They lives in a social relationship. This term is used to distinguish man from a natural being”<sup>1</sup>.

This means a being who lives and conducts activity in social relationship differently from natural being.

Man lives in the society unlike the other living matters. Man's life and activity are possible only in the social collective that is organically linked on the basis of a certain social relations.

There cannot be a man who lives outside of social relations. It is therefore a peculiar mode of existence for man to live and conduct activity forming the social collective in social relation. Philosophically, human being is by nature destined to live in a pattern of life, that is social and political suitable to his own nature. The challenges and advancements of life in our globe have indicated that no man is an Island". As a community being, he cannot live in isolation of others but for those who prefers to live in isolation of others are either beasts or God.

Therefore, man as a social being lives and conducts activity in social relationship differently from natural being. Man lives in the society unlike the other living matters. Man's life and activity are possible only in the social collective that is organically linked on the basis of a certain social relations. All these in a single sentence suffice that one should agree to the opinion of Aristotle that man is a social and political animal.

# CHAPTER 1

## MAN AS A SUBJECT OF INQUIRY

**M**an is the subject of our inquiry. He is at the centre of the whole universe in which he finds himself with other beings. The beingness of man is surely attested to by all, but there are various notions towards the understanding of what man is from different schools of thoughts.

Man is a gregarious being. By nature he lives with his fellows and like it. Indeed, no cruel punishment can be inflicted upon an individual than to isolate him from others for a long period of time. For Harold J. Laski: “Man is a community building animal driven by inherited instincts to live with his fellows”.<sup>2</sup> Man is regarded as the highest and the most perfect

product of nature. It is so because of distinguishing characteristics of the human person. He is endowed with reason and with this capacity he can comprehend the wonders of existence and is ever thrilled by them. However, man became a social being from the age of settlement when he began to communicate mutually with one another. The pertinent question that arises about man is "what is man? The study of man has continually attracted the attention of philosophers from the ancient time till the present day. Every philosopher describes man from his own perspective. Some philosophers take both empirical and metaphysical approaches to the study of man while others take one-sided view only.

Is man just as marvelous as other creatures or is there any difference? The common description of man is that man is an ordinary biological organism endowed with reason. Every theory

of creation, secular or religious, accords man with the highest dignity of the intellect, which differentiates him from other animals. Man is the only creature that answers the fundamental questions of life.

In traditional African philosophy, man is a being with three elements namely: the body, soul and spirit. The body is tangible and visible while the soul and the spirit cannot be seen or touched. The body is the cloak of the soul and the soul is the place in the body where the spirit lives. The spirit gives the soul its specific nature. It is the spirit that interacts with other beings in the esoteric plane; hence, man shares in the universal life of the spirit. The spirit is the animating and sustaining life force in man. The spirit is also the moral part of man. This is the reason why the good behavior of man emanates from the good spirit in him whereas the evil or bad behavior of man arises from the same evil spirit in him.

For Aristotle, man is a rational animal, essentially constituted of matter (body) and form (soul) this refers to the material and spiritual nature of man.

However, looking at Karl Marx, a great exponent of socialism, conceives man as a biosocial being whose essence is the aggregate of social relations. The very existence of man as a social being necessarily presupposes human mutual relations, not only in the influence of social conditions and other people on a given man but also his influence on social conditions and other people. Therefore, all these attest that man is a being-in-the-world with others. To be is to be with others. He is a social animal and for him to alienate or isolate himself from the social network of his nature is to beastify himself. He is a being in relation with others. This bears testimony to the African way of life which upholds the philosophy of communalism "I am, because we are".

## CHAPTER 2



### MAN: AS COMMUNITY BEING

One of the most cherished experiences of human existence, relationship is defined by oxford Dictionary as the state of being connected. It implies being associated, affiliated. Life with all its complexity finds its meaning, richness and enjoyment in being related to other individuals such extent that the famous philosopher Martin Buber has defined life in terms of relationship when he said that life is Relationship. Human life has its origin in the intimate relationship of a man and woman in the marriage act from time immemorial in the civilized non-cloning society. Every moment in a person's life from birth to death is the experiencing of relationship with others. If these relationships are good,

then the person concerned will feel happy. Bad relationships, on the other hand, will cause discomfort. The art of happy living is centered around fostering healthy relationships with one and all in the society

As a being who lives among others, man must have to revolve out of his “self” and reach out to others in a fraternal friendship. When man is referred to as a community being, it means a being who lives and conducts activity in social relationship differently from natural being and human lives in the society unlike the other living matters. Man's life and activity are possible only in the social collective that is organically linked on the basis of a certain social relations.

God did not create man as a “solitary being”, (cf. Gen.. 1: 27; 2:18-20,23) Life in society is not something “added-on” for the human person: It seems an important dimension intrinsic to human nature. Human beings can grow and

attain their calling in life only in union with others. Therefore, each person is called to exist for others to become a gift. Existing “for” others entails much more than just “co-existing” with them. It means serving them and loving them.

For man to socialize, he must be in contact with others like his family, peer groups, social gatherings and media contacts. For him to be at peace and good harmony with his fellow men, he must have a good human relation.

However, by good human relation, it means bearing the interest of the common good in mind. A good which is ensured by the general to be of benefit for the mass of the people. It is a good which members of the community should seek and bring about together, because it answers the essential of the human. All men are to enjoy its benefits together because it requires the members of the community to go beyond their particular interests

This is why John Mbite notes, the African view of the person can be summed up in this statement: “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am”<sup>3</sup>

As far as human existence is concerned, the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of individual life histories.

Man's thoughts, words, acts and aspirations are done within the context of a community or in the light of a group in which he belongs. I can also say the social nature of a man has also a religious backing, when we consider the Biblical account of creation. Yahweh God said, “It is not good that man should be alone, I will make him a help mate” Gen. 2:18. This comes to prove that man is destined to live in the company of others. This also approves the adage that says that no man is an Island.

This comes to make it more difficult to prove of an individual's existing outside the community of people, because an individual existence must

be influenced by others directly or indirectly.

For Akam: “No human life, not even the life of the hermit in nature's wilderness, is possible without a world which directly or indirectly testifies to the presence of other human beings”<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, man has no option than to succumb to the quest for community social living, when it is in solidarity with others that man fully realizes himself. Community confirms that personal achievements come from shared knowledge, common values, and mutual support. Society is responsible for the success of all.

# CHAPTER 3



## INDIVIDUAL

Looking at the principle of individualism, we can say that, taking man out of society makes him sole judge of what surrounds him and of himself, give him a heightened sense of the rights without showing him his duties, abandons him to his own powers, and, for the whole of government, proclaims *laisser-faire* (non-chalet).

Individualism places man in isolation full of anxieties and perils. Viewing individualism from the point of view of socialist thinkers, individualism signified the autonomy freedom, and sacredness of the individual values which had hitherto taken a negative, oppressive and anarchic form. For Ferdinand Brunetiere Individualism was a great sickness of the

present time... Each of us has confidence only in himself, sets himself up as the sovereign judge of everything.... When intellectualism and individualism reach this degree of self infatuation, one must expect them to become nothing other than anarchy...<sup>5</sup>

It has to do with isolating oneself from the community, from the mass of his fellows and to draw apart from his family and friends, abandoning the wider society to itself. This way of life weakens the social bonds.

This is why Thomas Aquinas affirms that man is not an isolated individual who can attain his end simply as an individual by using his own individual reason, he is by nature a social or political being born to live in community with his fellows.

Therefore, when an individual decides to live a life of isolation from the others or his community, it affects his existence. Man is

meant to co-exist with others right from birth, so it is natural for man to exist in relation with his kinds. When an individual made up his mind to ex-communicate himself from others by staying at home for lengthy periods of time having no communication with family, acquaintances or friends, or willfully avoiding any contact with other humans when those opportunities do arise.

These usually occur, when there is an issue with others. The individual may attempt to justify this reclusive or isolating behavior or attitude as enjoyable or comfortable but yet it has serious health implications.

But the question is: can man live in actuality without others? Since man is by nature a social and political animal, he needs others for his survival and existence, Just as a human child depends totally on his parents and others for its survival and growth. In the same way, man can never develop his personality? Language,

culture and inner deep” by living outside his society. This is because every man is born, grows, live and die in a community. Community fulfills all his needs and equally provides security. Both are closely inter-related, interconnected, and inter-dependent. Therefore, without community, human's life is just like fish out of water.

## CHAPTER 4



### THE BENEFIT OF LIVING WITH OTHERS

**T**he most important single educational factor to which people are subjected to is the family in which they grow up. The family has a lot of impact in the manner in which we behave or see things. Children learns a lot through imitation from their parent. Therefore, parent should inculcate and instill those beliefs that reflect the values of the culture such as living in union with others around them and fully participating in community activities.

It means, that, if children are not directed on this part, they will surely have problems of proper human relation as adults. They will not be able to cope in life or know how to interact with the

wider society. They have to be taught the cultural values of their community from childhood, because it is inscribed deeply in the spirit of the people and also in their custom. Cultural values are distinct but consanguineous. They support one another in good times and bad; they hold hands and lock arms in the face of oppression as well as depression in time of peace.

The children has to know and learn some of these values that keeps the community in union such as sacredness human life, respect for parents and elders, hospitality chastity especially among woman folk. It is something positive and that is what keeps the community in harmony as Pope John II, admonished Africans thus:

“Preserve carefully your Africa roots, safeguard the values of your culture. You know them and are proud of them; respect for life, family solidarity and support for relatives, respect for

the old, the sense of hospitality. Judicious preservation of traditions, the taste for feasts and symbols”<sup>6</sup> Therefore, families is the foundation that nourishes and sustains life with its vital and organic links with society, having a sense of shared meaning and purpose. Having important role to play in the community in which belong and when you belong actively and not passively. It is also about feeling that you belong to this community; that you trust others and they trust you in a shared purpose and that group members can rely on each other . African society is a community oriented society. They live and work within and with the community. They community oriented person contributes in cash and kind towards the development of the good of the community. They community members should lead initiatives that will build trust and psychological bonds between community members. Children should learn how to associate with others, and when they become

adults, it will not be difficult for them.

Therefore, children should be taught all these values, in order to imbibe it and assimilate it for their better tomorrow, because we need others in our social journey.

## CHAPTER 5



### HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

**B**iologically and psychologically man is compelled to live in community. Sociality is his natural instinct. All his human qualities such as: to think, to enquire, to learn language, to play and work are developed within the context of the community. Therefore, nature compel him to live with his fellow beings and he cannot be a normal person living in isolation.

It means that when an individual decides to isolate himself from the company of others, he or she is bound to be wounded by some negative factors. However, one isolating himself from the society can be a chronic condition affecting all aspects of a person's existence. It can lead to feelings of loneliness,

fear of others or negative self-esteem. Social isolation is very risky for healthy living because sometimes it leads to depression.

Social isolation is both a potential cause and a symptom of emotional or psychological challenges. It also spring up into weeds of deteriorating physical health. For example: Loneliness, while common definitions of loneliness describe it as a state of solitude or being alone, loneliness is actually a state of mind.

Loneliness causes people to feel empty, alone, and unwanted. Health risks associated with loneliness or isolations includes:

1. Depression and suicide
2. Cardiovascular disease and stroke
3. Increased stress levels
4. Decreased memory and learning
5. Antisocial behavior
6. Poor decision - making
7. Alcoholism and drug abuse.

The following may be some of the root causes why individual isolated themselves from the community.

- (a) Loss of a spouse:- If a spouse has recently separated, divorced or died, the other may be lonely and depressed
- (b) Disabilities and Health issues:- One may be embarrassed by their disabilities or health problems, such that they have a tendency to isolate themselves from others due to fear of stigmatization.
- (c) Sacrilegious act may cause isolation because of fear of shame and of how others will react.
- (d) The loss of a loved one can contribute to social isolation.

Social isolation are threat and harmful to our health, social networks and friendships not only have an impact on reducing the risk of mortality or developing certain diseases, but they equally help individual to recover fast when they fall ill.

Therefore, human relations are important for the overall well-being of an individual and one cannot ignore this fact. The rising incidence of anxiety, depression and other mental problems is the result of lack of close human relationships. Talking to a close friend or relative helps in releasing mental as well as physical stress. Therefore, our mental health and personal well being are tied in the quality of our personal relationships. It means that the more closely we are connected to the people we love, the more happier we feel in our lives.

# CHAPTER 6



## CONCLUSION

**R**elationships govern every sphere of human life from the cradle to the grave. The family is the place where one is born and brought up, where one experiences the highest form of relationship, that is, blood relationship. The tender love and care, affection and encouragement received from parents and relatives in the context of the family, help one to grow towards personality fulfillment and to find happiness and success in life. It may be noted here that the word relative simply means a person who has relationship with an individual.

We have gone a long way towards situating the “*arthropods*” (man) in his unique and social settings. I have come to the realization and

consequently the conclusion that man is a community being.

I have come to know the important role of socialization in man's life. Socialization, I am forced to conclude is the fullness and actualization of man's being. Man, I am convinced cannot exist outside the society.

The origin of man in a narrow sense when traced to birth is as a result of the joint act of two human beings with different individualities, thus originally man is a being out of a union of beings. Apart from this, the childhood experience is that of cares and affections from others, at least that of mother to whom a child must necessarily cling to.

Again, daily observation also has shown the fact of intuition to be a contestable matter. It has rather been argued that whatever knowledge we possess must have been gotten from others and things around us.

Therefore, man is not self-sufficient in his quest for knowledge.

Looking at language, it is an indispensable part of man's existence. It is mainly useful for its communicative function, and to communicate, others presence cannot be ignored. This is because man is a talking being, and because talking is usually done with others, man is therefore condemned to be social, if he must talk. Communication is the basic building block of our relationships. It is through communication that we convey our thoughts, feelings, aspirations, connection to one another. Therefore, developing good communication skill is critical for successful relationships with parent, spouse, sibling and friends. Effective communication is the cornerstone for fostering long-term relationship in the community.

After having looked at relationship from several human and divine viewpoints, it may not be difficult now to see why relationship has been

equated with life itself. Life is at its best when relationship is on a peak, and life is at its worst when relationship hits the bottom level. Personality development too owns much to growth in relationship such that the quality of one's personality can be gauged by one's ability to foster good relationship in adverse circumstances.

In conclusion, man is essentially a social being, because he cannot be without others. "To be is to be with others".

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