



Philosophico-Literary Hermeneutics on the Life of the Female Child in a Gendered World

Michael Maduawuchi Uzomah¹

¹St. Albert Institute, Fayit-Fadan Kagoma, an Affiliate of University of Jos, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria

ScholasticaChinyere Uzomah^{2*}

^{2*}St. Albert Institute, Fayit-Fadan Kagoma, an Affiliate of University of Jos, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria

Sylvanus Undiekeye Attoh³

³St. Albert Institute, Fayit-Fadan Kagoma, an Affiliate of University of Jos, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria

Abstract

This treatise is an inter-disciplinary critical discourse in philosophy and literary studies. It interrogates the perennial and ubiquitous sexism and unfounded bias of the patriarchal society against the female child. The method and theoretical tool of analysis employed in this phenomenological study is hermeneutics. Through this method, the expository analysis reveals that the life of the average girl-child in the gendered world is encumbered by gender-based discriminations, prejudices, exploitations, mutilations, and dominations. The zenith of the litanies of indignities that demeans the life of the girl-child is the relegation of the latter to the status of a second class citizen in relation to her male counterpart. Based on the findings of this hermeneutical and phenomenological analysis, the discourse concludes by asserting the thesis that all humans (males and females) are born equally, and equals ought to be treated equally, irrespective of their gender types. However, owing to the indissoluble biological differences between men and women, neither gender sameness nor gender neutral society is unachievable. Based on this tokenism, gender parity or equality should not be misunderstood as gender sameness or uniformity or even negative motherhood. We therefore recommend that the goal of gender studies and feminism should be the quest for egalitarianism, mutual respect and symbiotic relationship between people of the two genders.

Keywords: Female-Child, Gender Equality, Gender neutrality or Sameness, Gendered World, Hermeneutics, Sexism.

Introduction

This treatise is a philosophico-literary analysis of the phenomenon of discriminatory gender relations that permeate and pervade the daily lived experiences of humans in society. The discriminatory gender-based relations are most apparently inordinate in nature and as such, they perpetuate various forms of imbalances and inequalities-socially, politically, economically, religiously, etc. The most contemptible factor about this inordinate gender-based discrimination that makes it evoke the magnitude of negative emotions it does is that it denigrates and prioritizes one gender at the costly expense of the order. Consequently, the questions that dictate the thrust, structure and texture of this philosophical cum literary analysis include: Are women sub-humans? Are women not equally gifted intellectually? Do women have the capability to contribute towards the advancement of humanity?

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 ScholasticaChinyere Uzomah
 Sylvanus Undiekeye Attoh
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It is an empirical fact that women are more than 50% of human population; hence, is it not ridiculously ironic that they are excluded in academic research? Is the quest for gender equality or parity achievable? If yes, what manner of gender equality is achievable—gender uniformity/sameness or fairness, mutual respect and egalitarianism? Based on the findings of this hermeneutical and phenomenological analysis, the discourse concludes by asserting the thesis that all humans (males and females) are born equally, and equals ought to be treated equally, irrespective of their gender types. Owing to the indissoluble biological differences between men and women, neither gender sameness nor gender neutral society is unachievable. Based on this tokenism, gender parity or equality should not be misunderstood as gender sameness or uniformity or even negative motherhood. Consequently, the goal of gender studies and feminism should be the quest for egalitarianism, mutual respect and symbiotic relationship between people of the two genders. Meanwhile, in the delineation of the functional areas of each of the gender types, in the definition of their respective identities, duties, responsibilities and normative expectations, the society must neither exaggerate nor exploit these inextricable biological differences.

Life in a Gendered World

At birth, all humans are born free and equal (but not same), subsequently, gender socialization unequally recreates them in forged identities and images. In strict adherence to the yearnings and aspirations of the society, responsibilities, rights and roles are apportioned to them based on their recreated gender types, in accordance with socio-cultural normative expectations, respectively.

Providentially, the life of the woman is full of compromises, from infancy to adulthood, from birth to death she sacrifices her desires for the father and wellbeing of her male siblings, and, she sacrifices her ambition for the husband and the children. What is more? She compromises her comfort for dire needs and to ensure peace and harmony in her relationships. Often times, she makes these compromises not voluntarily but out of certain real and imagined influences from gender lore and the normative social order masterminded by the patriarchal hegemonic imperialism that prioritize the man. The society prioritizes men over women; it places men in the pedestal of preeminence and transcendence over the women folks! This, most unfortunately, has been a universal shared norm; even when it is subject to individual cultural dynamism.

Boys and girls, men and women are born equally into the biological world, but society unequally recreates them into forged images by exploiting and exaggerating biological differences existing between the two sexes. The governing propensity behind this casting, this polarization and differentiation is gender

lore (Uzomah, M.M. 2017:1). Against this backdrop, Ogurotimi, O. (2014:1) makes this factual assertion:

Every human society could be analyzed along hierarchized lines that may be political, economic, social or religions. The most apparent dichotomy however, and that which cuts across this hitherto mentioned realms would be that of gender.

As far as recorded history is concerned, as far as objective approbation and disapprobation is concerned, and as far as human memory can recall, even as far as irrefutable empirical evidence can attest, every known human society has been hierarchized, polarized, stratified, differentiated, and categorized based on gender reckoning. Gender lore is a mutable universal precept that governs human affairs globally. It is here described as mutable because it is susceptible to the unique and dynamic nature cultures of peoples in different climes, credos, geographical locations, languages, dialects, cosmopolitan spaces, etc. In lieu of this, it is significantly germane that a reflection on gender studies should properly commence with a reaffirmation of the indubitable factual statement that, we live in a society and globe that is gendered. We live in a society where roles, duties, responsibilities, behavioural norms, and relations are socially and culturally constructed with little or no regard to biological templates (biological differentiations and diverse capabilities of the complementary sexes). And this indiscriminate socio-cultural construct could be plausibly described as repugnant to the principles of equality, natural justice and fairness. Humans have lived for time immemorial with this social injustice (Uzomah, M.M. 2017:1).

Gender and sex are the two basic categories that supremely govern social intercourse in every human society. “Gender and sex is a significant aspect of politics and economy of society; and as such it plays a role in virtually all facets of life” (<https://www.tema.liu.se/temag/grundutb/genvet?l=en>). Its assertive posture is everywhere felt in the world of fashion, entertainment industry, within religious circles, institutions of lower and higher learning, social gatherings, in and around halls and corridors of power; and everywhere where human social intercourse or relations is possible. Gender impacts every social activities of people, ranging from work life, intimate intercourses, political engagements, etc. “Gender influences and asserts itself in war and love; the world is perceived through the gender lens, norms that define proper behaviours and appearances (social relations) between the two sexes that govern families, the mass media, social media, social networks and other media of socialization are based on gender-based stereotypes” (Ibid). Gender occupies a crucial place in the economic and political life of people. It pervades all aspects and facets of human life in the society, hence, consciously or unconsciously, every living human being in the society is directly or indirectly under the inexorable influence of gender/sex ordering. It suffices to assert

that from birth to death, gender roles play decisive and crucial roles in defining the ‘who’ and ‘what’ of an individual person within a given social cultural milieu and climate. So, all humans are socialized to act under the impulses of gender deterministic principles. Consequently, the concepts, ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ are not only endemic but ubiquitous in human history and civilization. Right from cradle and childhood, we are governed by gender lore. It has been unavoidably part of our daily conversation, humor and conflict and it is often employed as a tool to explicate or conceptualize everything, ranging from lifestyles, food preferences, taste of fashion, etc. (<https://antifeministpraxis.files.wordpress.com> retrieved 30th August, 2017). In other words, the omnipresence of gender lore is an integral aspect of the culture of man right from birth to death. “Gender is scrupulously entrenched in our dress code, actions, beliefs, institutions and mental disposition, and this makes it apparently utterly natural. Gender is inherently an understatement to assert that the world swims in thoughts that revolve round gender and these ideals are so commonplace that we take their truth value for granted, hence we accept them as if they were scientific facts (Ibid).

The ubiquity and omnipresence of gender lore has made it so conventional that it has been accepted, both as a natural, and as an undisputable empirical fact of nature. Consequently, it becomes the yardstick and the measuring rod for determining how people ought to think, act, speak and behave in a given society. Gender lore from ab initio, has been the underlying principles of human civilization, socialization and orientations. To say the least, it also profoundly influences individuals’ career choices, it is responsible for the traditional delineation of roles. It discriminately imposes identities, images, duties, responsibilities and rights on people of the two gender types, respectively, in accordance with socio-cultural ideologies establishing the perceived potentials and limitations of the two genders. Without gainsaying, it should be stated that the most infamous aspect of this socio-cultural gender polarizing and apportioning of social roles is that it employs double standards for the two sexes.

Although, gender lore may not be in the form of a written law, however, they are formidable conventions that socialization, social integration and coercion, and civilization, imposed on individuals as a **conditio sine qua non** for living in the human society. In other words, it becomes the tenancy rate man pays for residing in any given human society. For instance, right from childhood, the society through its principal agent of socialization, the family has already inscribed it in the cognition of the girl child how insecure it is for her to stay out late at night, or be found in awkward places. On the other hand, right from childhood, the spirit of boldness and liberty is instilled on the boy child such that he is not afraid to neither stay out late nights nor venture into places that are dreadful. Right from

infancy, the boy child is given a free hand and he is trained to be superior and adventurous, while the girl child is tendered with utmost care and cultured to be subservient, humane, humble and under the protection of men. She is taught that her greatest asset is her character, and that her character will open all doors for her. For instance, if she is meek, noble, chaste (a virgin) and virtuous, men of wealth, power, influence and affluence will travel from far and near in search of her. With this in mind, she has no need for career, because she is to be a caretaker of the husband’s wealth at home. She has no identity outside the husband (the glory of the woman is the husband, and in him does her identity subsists). On the other hand, is the boy child, who, right from birth is cultured and oriented to believe that he is born to be a provider, protector and a lord of his wife and entire household. Consequently, he is so trained to accomplish these tripartite responsibilities. He is told that with his wealth, material goods, influence and affluence, he can marry even the most beautiful and priceless women on earth. Eventually, when he successfully accomplishes this task, the woman whom he paid a price (bride price) to acquire becomes part of his property that must be subjected to his whims and caprices. The salient fact about gender lore that has over the last century, attracted the aggressive attention of gender scholars and feminists is the realization that gender lore, which is culturally and socially constructed, is discriminatory, to the advantage of one gender over the other. Being based on age-long stereotypes, gender lore capriciously polarizes or apportions roles for the various genders. For instance, in our society, men and women perform different roles and are assigned different responsibilities. Hence, roles and normative expectations differ for the different gender types, the experiences of them differ in ways that are dependent upon one’s gender type. Gender disparities have so become a common place that it takes more than profound contemplation to reveal its inappropriateness. In realization of this perennial and endemic disparities and inordinate discriminations, scholars sympathetic to women's project are asking for just four things:

1. Equal education;
2. Fairness and equal opportunity in job employment, equal remuneration;
3. Equal opportunities in political participation.
4. In addition, radical feminists are asking for holistic overhaul of all structures and superstructure of society that upholds the disparity between the gender types to make way for sameness and uniformity (gender equality).

In other words, men and women should be given equal opportunity in all spheres of life in the society. They should be equally trained to compete for opportunities whether in the labour market, politics, at home, etc. based on their competences and cognate experiences, except where natural limitations say otherwise. If this is the demand of feminists and gender thinkers, isn’t it a

fair demand? In consequence, as scholars, philosophers, sociologists and thinkers, it is our wholesome task to go beyond the apparently commonplace, not necessarily to unfold the underlain truth, but to unveil how the commonplace assumed common sense. Based on the understanding that gender is apparently natural and conventions about gender appear as obvious truths, it is imperative that we pause and examine gender from a novel outlook. This simply demands that we bracket what we are used to and feel comfortable with and objectively interrogate our most fundamental dogmas regarding gender roles and gender relations (cited in Uzomah, 5-20). This calls for a profound and overall overhauling of our belief systems, a pricking of conscience, total retrospect of the foundations and root cause of our social and cultural convention. In other words, it obliges a fact finding and revolutionary enquiry to ascertain the genuineness and moral standing of the underlying philosophies behind roles differentiations, power relations and power play between the two genders. In the final analysis, it involves an ontological and holistic probing of the concept of gender (Uzomah, M.M. 2017:8). However, it must be humbly admitted that this is apparently a herculean task. Not minding the peculiarity of this herculean task, the onus lies on scholars who ideally are the conscience of the conscienceless society to exert themselves to discharging this dire service to humanity. It is the noble duty of men and women of good will and sound conscience, to interrogate the infamous role played by patriarchal structures and institutions in perpetuating imbalances and inequalities between these genders for no just cause. Gender studies must necessarily seek to establish why academic researches, theories and scholasticism have always sidelined women. Several research women's studies have established that academic disciples often fail to take women into consideration while developing theories and concepts and data collection in research. Housework which is the main work assigned to women are not considered part of the GDP of a country. Why not, and isn't this inaccurate? A sustainable gender studies should reveal and address imbalances, inaccuracies and errors in various disciplines. Also, it should ask pertinent and penetrating questions like why these errors have and imbalances emerged? <https://antifeministpraxis.files.wordpress.com> retrieved 30th August, 2017).

The Gargantuan Economic Gap and Gender Studies

The imbalances and gaps between men and women is so astronomically phenomenal that it would take a very long period to dismantle. According to Olusola Babarinsa, after progress towards gender parity suffered a dramatic slowdown, in a report released in October 2016, by the World Economic Forum (WEF), it was claimed that the economic between men and women globally may take up to one hundred and seventy years to bridge. This report purported that

regardless of the fact that women have attained remarkable educational achievement in catching up and overtaking men in ninety five (95) countries, yet women still earn less in exchange for longer hours of labour. They are even likely to have a job and are far likely to be employed in senior managerial positions (Uzomah, M.M. 2017:10). In the opinion of this report, the four major areas of disparity between the sexes include education, health, economic opportunity and political participation. Among these four areas, it is only in the economic sector that relative progress has been made towards bridging the gap between sexes. However, the acceleration of the progresses made by various countries differs. For instance, according to WEF, Western Europe is expected to bridge gender disparity in forty seven (47) years, South Africa in more than one thousand (1000) years. Generally, the Nomadic countries have made the most appreciable progress in gender parity. In Iceland men and women are most equal, followed by Finland, Norway and Sweden, respectively. Rwanda occupied the fifth position on the table of top ten table for gender parity. Rwanda's position was fostered by President Paul Kagame's commitment to gender parity. This report by WEF, is only but a partial eye opener to the depth and magnitude of gender disparities between men and women in virtually all countries of the world. Consequently, the origins of gender studies lie in women's studies. It is a brain child of aggressive and revolutionary movement and activism against the varying degrees of imbalances and disparities between the two sexes. Boys and men benefit at the detriment of girls and women. Moreover, women's studies aim to indicate and address the imbalances and gaps in academics and knowledge base that is the resultant consequence of women's exclusion or inadequate in cooperation into academics. Hence, gender studies exist because of the nagging for the critical questioning of the gendered nature social and physical spaces.

Historical Development of Gender Studies

It is germane to place on record that the academic discipline known as gender studies has relatively short history. The academic study of gender was influenced the aggressive and astute agitations of women and feminists globally for gender parity. Specifically, the origin of gender studies could be traced the late 1960s and its development was fostered by the second wave feminism. The principal focus of the second wave feminism was the campaign against gender inequalities in personal relationships and socio-poetical positioning, the exclusion of women in academic disciplines, exclusion of women's experiences, interests and identities by academic research, theories and knowledge base. Before the 1970s, the Social Sciences in general and particularly sociology practically ignored gender. It primarily focused its study lens on men and topics concerning the dimensions of the social world (e.g. paid work and politics) that are particularly

beneficial to men (Whelehan, I. and Pilcher, J. 2017: ix). The antecedents that inadvertently necessitated gender studies projected and asserted men in all facets of human endeavor as if they were the only authentic human species or gender in existence. They present unfortunately women whom are more than half of humanity as appendages.

Prior to the 1970s' gender-blind philosophy, sociology and literary studies, women were almost invincible. During this period, these disciplines portrayed women in their traditional roles as wives and mothers within families. They were accorded a social status no less higher than that of children (in fact, in the Scriptures and Testaments of world religions, women are not considered in census). They had no right to vote and no right to certain civic duties that men enjoy. This demean status of the women folk is what Simone De Beauvoir described in the following terminologies-they were regarded as the "Second Sex", "the Inessential", "the Insignificant", "the Inconsequential" etc. during this material and historic time, disparities and imbalances between men and women were not seen as an issue of sociological importance and a problem worth the critical study of sociology.

However, with the advent of second wave feminist studies, scores of disciplines in the social sciences, arts and humanities started paying critical, developing and sustained attention to gender discourses (Whelehan, ix). Against this backdrop, disparities and imbalances existing between men and women was considered by scholars (especially women sociologists) a problem deserving of critical interrogation and explanation during the 1970s. Originally, sociological studies were geared towards bridging the gaps in knowledge about women created by the prior male bias and insensitivity (Whelehan, ix). With the progression of time, there was a gradual shift of attention to aspects of experiences (e.g. motherhood, housework, paid work, domestic violence, etc.) that are important to women.

At this material time, women took advantage of literary studies to campaign against hegemony of a great body of literary works which completely excluded women writers. One of the disturbing factor women scholars in literature contested was the fact that these great works were silent about the material and social conditions that militated against the emergence of great women writers. Have you not noticed that classical and medieval, and even early modern literary works were all ascribed to male authors, playwrights, novelists and poet? Moreover, prior to feminists protest, the characterization of literary works, saw women being assigned subsidiary and supporting roles, performing menial jobs and projected as best suited to being submissive to men. These literary works projected and celebrated men as heroes worthy of emulation, while women were portrayed as weak, insignificant and objects of men's sexual escapades and gratification. Historians were not left out in this tacit evil conspiracy. In their respective accounts of history

and historic figures whose heroic efforts has advanced nations and made nations great, they always asserted men as the messiahs and portrayed women as historically insignificant and inessential. Hardly was a woman portrayed in the positive light as contributing to the rise of nations. Where she is portrayed, it is always in the negative as conniving to bring down empires. With this harrowing experience of women in men's world, women scholars were convinced beyond reasonable doubt that humanity is living in a false world created by men and for the benefit of men. They concluded that the whole corpus of knowledge available is only but a partial knowledge because it came from less than half of human population. It is men's account and not that of humanity. They maintained that to have a comprehensive and authentic history of mankind, women's accounts of history must be incorporated. This bias scenario agitated concerned thinkers to question if women are sub-humans? Are women not equally gifted intellectually? Are women not gifted at all to render contributions towards the advancement of humanity? Women constitute more than half of the population of mankind; if this is true, why are they excluded in researches? The facts or knowledge emerging from these one-sided researches, can they rightly be seen as representing knowledge about humanity? These questions overwhelmingly instigated scholars to search for answers beyond the traditional ambiances or purviews of their home-disciplines (Whelehan, ix). These questions propelled feminists and concerned thinkers to interrogate the status quo.

During 1960s and early 1970s, the appreciable number of women focused in the humanities as against other academic fields make to faculty ready for feminist critique. This is because the concentration of a large number of women scholars in the humanities was itself the aftermath of the gendered logic of the workplace. Women studies, having assumed the status of a specialized area of academic interest during the US and from the mid to late 1970s, started developing as well as rapidly spreading around the world (Whelehan, ix). These studies which gave rise to feminism, spread like wild fire all over the globe. As time progressed, the momentum and ferociousness of this activism and battle against this unjust human arrangement increased astronomically.

Gender-Based Practices and Violence against Women (The Girl-child)

In feminist critiques as well as in literary analysis, there are litanies of gender-based practices and violence against the female child that are interrogated. Some of these catalogues include breast ironing, female genital mutilation (FGM), sexism, violation of the rights of the girl-child, rape, child marriage, trafficking in women for prostitution, domestic violence, stalking and battery, servitude in marriage, etc. Let us briefly

consider breast ironing and female genital mutilation (FGM).

Breasts Ironing

Breast ironing is otherwise known as breast flattening. Breast ironing consists of a consistent massaging and pounding of pubescent girl's breast with a heated or hard object with the aim of retarding the normal development of the breasts, and or to make the breast disappear (T. C. Falana, 2020: 10). Breast ironing is considered another form of mutilation because against the normal biological process, its major aim is to either make the breast grow slowly or completely disappear (Tchoukuo, 2014). The aim of breasts ironing is to retard the growth or development of the pubescent girl's breast or to totally stop their growth. The main reason for this cultural practice is to prevent boys from sexually harassing teenage girls, thereby preventing premarital sex, teenage unwanted pregnancies and transmission of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Ultimately, the goal of breast ironing is to protect the honour of the family whose good name would have been tarnished should its teenage daughters get pregnant outside wedlock.

Notwithstanding the apparent cogency of the rationales behind breast ironing, it has been strongly condemned by gender and feminist literary critics and as such, it has been construed not as a cultural imperative but a significant mutilation of the physical integrity and abuse of the full sexual autonomy of the female child. In this sense, it is seen as one of the prevalent systematic violations of the universal human rights to personal integrity and sexual autonomy against women folk. This obnoxious practice is irrefutably an abuse in the sense that it pugnaciously infracts the girl-child's natural right to possess natural physiological aesthetics that adorns a woman. Some of the physical adverse side-effects of breast ironing include breast cancer, breast itching, discharge of milk, dissymmetry of the breasts, abscesses and breast cysts. Pursuant to these outlined effects, Falana plausibly argues that the despicable practice of breast ironing is rightly considered a child abuse that deteriorates the female child physiological quality and affects her psychologically because it alters her social life. And the clinical and psychological consequences that necessarily make breast ironing not just an abuse but also violence on the female gender forcefully unleashed on her to satisfy the yearnings of her parents (Falana, 99). It remains to add that if one of the basic reasons adduced as justification for breast ironing is to prevent the boy child from harassing the teenage girl; then it should be asked, is it justified to chastise the she-goat for the atrocities of the he-goat? The obvious answer should be negative. Could it not have been justified to temporarily castrate the he-goat that gets attracted to the succulent breasts of the innocent and impressionable teenage girl? The practice of ironing the breast of the innocent girl-child is punitive and conspicuously exposes the injustice of the patriarchal

order that does not only prioritizes the male child but also abuses the rights of the female child for the benefit of the formal.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female genital mutilation (FGM) was formerly known as female circumcision for more than two thousand (2000) years. For this long, it has been practiced globally for variety of reasons in different cultures. Unlike male circumcision, it has been defined as the unnecessary medical modification of female genitals (Council on Scientific Affairs, 1995). It is important to point out that this practice was renamed FGM, in 1995 by the Council on Scientific Affairs, upon the realization that it is unnecessary medical intervention that distorts the genitalia of the female child. FGM, although viewed as an African and Asian problem is practice in virtually all continents. The only reason adduced as justification for this almost universal practice is to prevent sexual promiscuity or licentiousness in the female child. Since, the clitoris is the point of sexual stimulation and satisfaction, allowing the female child a full use of it may result in excessive sexual urge and less sexual satisfaction. And this may further result in the female child or woman uncontrollably seeking for premarital or extra martially sexual intercourse as the case may be. Therefore, to prevent this promiscuity, cultures decided to mutilate (circumcise) their female children. Against this background Falana, asserted that FGM is viewed as an essential and treasured ritual that binds the female individual child to her community. In addition, it promotes and stabilizes the norms and values of the given society (95). FGM has been impugned by scores of feminist scholars and literary analysts as gender-based cultural imperialism and violence against the female child. For scholars of this bent, FGM is not a cultural imperative required for the stabilization of the values and normative order of the society. Rather instead of preventing promiscuity, practical statistics show that it prevents mutilated women from achieving orgasm thereby leading to the desire to have extra sexual intercourse. More or less, FGM promotes promiscuity and licentiousness instead of curtailing or preventing the same. For instance, studies have revealed that the forceful and medically unnecessary removal of the clitoris alongside other sensitive tissues diminishes the circumcised woman's ability to experience sexual pleasure and ultimately reduces her ability to arriving at the zenith of sexual gratification known as orgasm. Moreover, the untold pain that accompanies the obnoxious genital cutting does not end at the point of mutilation of the clitoris and other sensitive tissues, it endures through the lifetime of the circumcised. Specifically, sexual intercourse is usually a hell of experience for the infibulated as a result of the tiny opening of the vaginal and lack of elasticity in the scar tissue that constitutes it. In the most complicated cases, tearing during sexual intercourse occurs. Hence,

to allow a frictionless penetration, the most likely solution to this has always been de-infibulations. Some of the long term medical and psycho-sexual problems that are consequence of FGM infibulations in many circumcised women is that it causes various degrees of birth-related complications. For instance, in most women who have not been de-infibulated before childbirth, obstructed labor occurred; thereby leading to life-threatening complications for both mother and infant child.

Gender Studies, Feminism and Social Change: The Gains so Far

This segment attempts an objective critique or evaluation of the hotly contested issue of patriarchal hegemony and gender inequality. The feminist agitation has and continues to cause social change by changing the way and manner boys and girls, men and women interact, which hitherto was deemed impossible. Life in the modern world has drastically transformed family structure and gender roles have been shifting from traditional structures of roles and responsibilities. The decision making power has experienced devolution. Women are increasingly being integrated into the mainstreams of the society, and their voices are being heard in every nook and cranny of the society. They also are steadily gaining access into halls of power in local, national and regional politics and in the comity of civilized nations. Their influence on the legal system cannot be overestimated or overemphasized, as there are countless laws that address issues pertaining to women, even to the disadvantage of men. The list of the overwhelming impact of the feminist aggressive offensive on the patriarchal hegemonic social order is endless. The ultimate goal of feminist social revolution is to counter every positive obstacle to women's autonomy, self-determination and progress; and to establish equality for all. Moreover, for the radical feminist, the ultimate goal of gender studies and feminism is to achieve gender sameness and uniformity (negative motherhood).

What It Should Be: The Philosophy of Sustainable Gender Parity

The focus of this segment is to establish what manner of gender equality or equity or parity is sustainably achievable. Let us begin by asserting first and foremost that, first, in calling the attention of humanity to the ills of patriarchy, radical feminists must shorn the exaggeration of the status quo, lest they become as guilty as their supposed aggressors. They must be objective enough to acknowledge that despite the fact that the status quo seems to favour men, yet the same men suffer untold difficulties and hardships as a result of uneven allocation of duties and responsibilities to men by the society. At this point, Connell is worth of special encomium for admitting that men embrace daunting challenges, take up herculean tasks and face

tremendous hardships and hazards in their work places, just for the sake of fulfilling their social roles which by their very nature are personal; to ensure that bread is always present on the table as breadwinners. Therefore, they must give some credit to men. Men work themselves out, go through emotional, mental and physical stress to fulfill their threefold duties; as protectors, providers and heads of their families. It amounts to ingratitude and obstinacy to wholly stereotype men as aggressors and oppressors of women. Feminists also must be sincere enough to acknowledge that most of these subsidiary, subservient or ancillary roles assigned to women are out of shared sympathy for the nature of women deemed precarious and delicate. Notwithstanding the fact that in some cases, there may be some exaggerations, even at that, some of these exaggerations were based on shared ignorance. Hence, it becomes unfair and uncharitable for feminists to engage in blanket accusation of men in all instances as being exploitative of women. In as much as one must condemn with the strongest term possible, the various physical violence women apparently suffer in the hands of men; feminists should be honest and fair enough to appreciate that, even men silently suffer despicable emotional and verbal torture in the hands of their wives and other significant women in their lives, who in extreme cases push them to their early graves. Verbal and mental assaults on men are no less destroying than physical assaults on women. Men also face battery, albeit in a minimal level in the hands of their wives, and no feminists for once raced an eye brawl against it.

Sexism

Feminists are quick to accuse men of sexual dominance and exploitation, but they are too economical with the truth. In most cases of casual relationships as well as in marriage, a good number of women express their grips on men by using their sex as a tool. Men go through starvation and hell to their utmost dismay before they are allowed a ration of sex. Even some men go as far as parting with some gratifications in terms of money or material things (as if they are paying to see prostitutes) before their legitimate wives could allow them a taste of what is legitimately theirs by the virtue of marriage. Too bad! Unfortunately, men die in silence because such ugly experience cannot be shared with friends nor mentioned in public. Moreover, feminists give the impression that sex and sex related activities are always to the favour, gratification and pleasure of men. This is an incredible conspiracy and obstinacy that must not be allowed to sell anymore. Indeed, sex is a woman's greatest oppressive and exploitative weapon of dominance against men. Moreover, feminists lousily and vilely allege that imperial masculinity has unacceptably recreated women into domestic and sexual objects. However, a critical observation of the behaviour of women in social affairs and social intercourse; especially in the entertainment industries reveals that women freely presents themselves as

objects of erotic fantasies. They go naked in musical videos, dance half naked, and are seen in the nook and crannies of society putting on immodest fashions that cause indecent exposures; they put on a whole lot of artificialities just to entice men. In fact, in campuses and within the circle of young people, one social fact that irresistibly imposes itself on the cognition of both the active and inactive observer is that women present themselves as objects of sexual gratification. What about the advertising industry, women models are employed as objects of lucrative commercial advertisement. Moreover, the extant civilization prevailing in our contemporary world today is that while men strive hard to cloth themselves with abundance of clothes, women strive even harder to go naked. Chai! What an oxymoronic and ironic paradox. Hey girl! Hey women! Stop making yourself an object and expect to be treated like a subject. By this we mean, stop selling your nude self in the entertainment world and expect the patriarchal world to adorn or exult your womanhood. Women must liberate themselves before society would complement their efforts. Why it is true that the patrilineal structure of the family enables men to be more empowered in all respect (although not wholly true today) at the expense of women; it equally appears that women seem to be either indifferent or reluctant to issues pertaining to empowerment. So, women must be ready for empowerment. Women, who cling to the fridge benefits accruing from the status quo, should understand that it is fulfilling to live for significance, than to live for survival. The former is meaningful, flourishing and fulfilling, while the latter is servitude. Women and the girls must be empowered to foster independence. Women must desist from clinging to undue privileges that denigrate their dignity and social status. We stand to boldly disparage the concept of affirmative action. This concept demands that states or nations must reserve thirty five percent (35%) elective and appointive political positions for women. This is inconsistent with the principle of fairness and tantamount to reversed discrimination. On the contrary, individuals should be equally empowered and a fair playing ground must be created for individuals, irrespective of their sex or gender to compete favorably, based on their competence. In other words, the demand for gender inclusiveness must not give room for reverse discrimination. The point we are making is this, men and women should equally be considered for political appointments based on their credentials, cognate experience and integrity and not on the basis of gender or sex. At this juncture, we make bold to state unequivocally that gender inequality does no good to anyone, therefore, it is a collective enemy of humanity. Consequently, the wholesome task to create a just social order and equilibrium is an unconditional duty for all. Change begins with you and us. Be the change you wish to see happen. We must individually and collectively, watch our thoughts, watch our habits,

watch our lifestyles, and watch our utterances. We must consciously and deliberately work against age-long stereotypes that breed artificial disparities and discriminations. We must in our daily relations and interactions with the complementary (opposite) sex, maintain mutual respect, equity, fairness and solidarity. We must change our minds and attitudes. The mind is the epicenter of change; no change or transformation of any sort is possible in the society and in its structures and institutions without a prior change of heart and mind (Uzomah, 2019). Remember the rationalist philosopher Aristotle, said, there is nothing in the world that has not first existed in the mind. Hence, from the profound recesses of our mind we must be resolute to work for gender parity. However, it is apropos to assert that fundamentally, equality is not sameness or uniformity, it is fairness. Leveraged on this given, gender parity must be understood not as sameness or uniformity, but as fairness. Women must admit the brute fact that gender sameness is unattainable because nature has not made us the same (even when it made us equal). Men and women obviously because of their insurmountable biological differences are in some respects substantially different, and this necessity implies that they cannot be the same in those respects, at least. This also necessarily implies that these substantial biological differences invariably may have influxes on their social roles. It is impossible to find two who are the same in every respect. It is equally impossible to find two groups of people that are equal to each other in all aspect. Invariably, there is always some sort inherent insurmountable inequality between groups of people. Nature itself appears in various instances not to be fair. Notwithstanding, there is nothing in the nature of women as far as the present level of the evolution of human beings today is concerned that precludes them from being capable of appropriately handling matters of safeguarding the valuable assets of our civilization; to warrant such conclusion. Notwithstanding this observation, there are real and actual indissoluble biological differences that make man and women different substantially. Accordingly, the battle for sameness or uniformity is a revolution waged against nature, therefore, a futile effort. While we maintain this brute fact, we equally concur with Beauvoir that gender differences do not imply gender inequality, rather we are born different yet equal. Moreover, the call for gender sameness or uniformity is synonymous with the call for gender neutrality. Already there is a small group of radicals and transgender in America demanding for gender-neutral birth certificate and for the complete abolishment of gender roles. Is it possible that gender neutral society would be the end of gender studies? If this is the ambition of gender scholars, then it promises to be an impossible possibility. This conclusion is based on the fact that before we can achieve gender uniformity or neutrality we must first of all approach nature to stop creating humans as boys and girls. In

other words, we must first of all eliminate all biological differences, like physiological, anatomical, hormonal etc. that makes for the respective reproductive potentials of males and females. For only there and then will there be a gender neutral society. Remember, any battle for a gender neutral society is a battle waged against almighty nature; of course such battle is tantamount to challenging one's god to a battle. Let say, gender disparities ordained by inherent biological differences of the male and female sexes, is one of the unfairness of nature we must learn to live with. We cannot change nature, we mean the insurmountable differences of the male and female folks, and this essentially makes the quest for gender sameness or uniformity and the yearning for a gender neutral society impossible. Rather fairness should be the most appropriate meaning for the feminist fight for equality. Yes, men and women are different, and the society needs them in different roles. Diversity is the spice and way of nature. Equality here means women should be treated equally in regards to their dignity and worth. Since gender parity presupposes equity and equality of all before the law, there is the compelling need for the law, whose ultimate goal is the promotion of the common good, justice, equity and fairness? The law must ensure that the relations between the genders in all aspects and sectors of the society must be cordial, symbiotic and fair. It must foster social justice in the affairs of men and uphold the inviolable dignity and integrity of humans irrespective of their gender type. It is essential to acknowledge the inviolable role of personal resolution towards ensuring a harmonious social order. Every boy and girl, every man and woman must endeavour to have a change of attitude. All obnoxious cultures and values that inspire inordinate gender discriminations and disparities must be obliterated. What is more? Men as well as women must learn how to accept the limitations imposed by nature. Remember, there is no perfect society anywhere, therefore we must not crave for one. Therefore, we recommend that gender parity or equality should not be misunderstood as gender sameness or uniformity-consequently, the goal of gender studies and feminism should be the quest for egalitarianism, mutual respect and symbiotic relationship between people of the two genders.

Conclusion:

The foregoing treatise is a philosophico-literary hermeneutical analysis of the life of the girl-child in a gendered world. The analysis reveals that the talks about gender are fundamentally complex and emotive. The study further reveals that there are litanies of imbalances, inequalities and inordinate social discriminations that characterize the lived experiences of the two gender types in the patriarchal hegemonic social order. This social order prioritizes men and elevates them to the pedestal of eminence and

transcendence at the odious expense of their female counterparts. Against this backdrop, we affirm the undying philosophical truism that all men and women are by birth equal, and the natural law of equity demands that equals be treated equally, irrespective of their gender types. However, owing to the indissoluble biological differences between men and women, neither gender sameness nor gender neutral society is unachievable. Yet, in the delineation of the functional areas of each of the gender types, in the definition of their respective identities, duties, responsibilities and normative expectations, the society must neither exaggerate nor exploit these inextricable biological differences. Where it has either been deliberately or ignorantly exaggerated and exploited out of the subtle and blatant influence of patriarchal spirit, it must be reviewed. Any role differentiation and gender relations that are not warranted by the limitations and strengths of the two gender types as imposed by nature are arbitrary and unjust. Most fundamentally, the demand for gender parity which is a demand for a justice and egalitarian social order for all genders is categorically imperative on all.

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