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Item Type	Book chapter
Authors	Ndikani, Chrisanthony
Publisher	Globethics.net
Rights	Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International
Download date	2026-11-10 23:46:03
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Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/4011257

14

VALUE SHARING FOR TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGUE: THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT

Chrisanthony Ndikani[181]

Introduction

Variety is the beauty of life, but misplaced values in diversity result in crisis and conflict situations in most parts of the globe today, especially in Nigeria. Ethical problems constantly reduce the quality of human relations, threaten human dignity, and breed societal unrest. Some of these issues are consequential to transmitted values. In Nigeria today, ethical issues in family, business, religion, leadership, and governance are becoming more problematic. Confusions arise regarding which particular value(s) operate in these entities. Are they of self-interests, ethnic interests, or agreed societal interests? Therefore no one cares about ethics, and struggles for survival by any possible means heighten moral and ethical decadence. This trend could also apply to other aspects of the global society, and leads to conflicts between communities, ethnic groups, and religious institutions. Crises of values also exist within/among the Church as the religious sector, witnessed both interreligious and intra-religious conflicts. Besides the well-known

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Islam/Christianity conflicts, which have claimed many lives in Nigeria, denominational conflicts call Christians to a serious reconsideration of the beauty of diversity. Due the presence of many Christian bodies in Nigeria, there is the tendency towards the feeling of denominational superiority and contempt of others who may cherish different religious values and norms. Consequently, misplaced diversity aggravates conflicts because there is no proper sharing of values through dialogue. Therefore, this chapter examines how ethical value sharing could be effective for transformative dialogue in Nigeria. It argues that transformative dialogue is capable of engendering mutual learning, understanding and respect. It also highlights how transformative dialogue is organized, how it informs the praxis of dialogue, how contemplative ethics - from the soul to the senses - can enhance dialogue, and also nurture needed values. Finally, it proposes a recent ethical approach in ecumenical engagement known as Receptive Ecumenism, which involves a process of 'explicit ecclesial self-critique' as a possible disposition for transformative dialogue in Nigeria.

Jürgen Moltmann observes, that "we live in troubled times," and he asks

> "…what are the roots of our troubles, and what might be the realistic basis for hoping that we can surmount them? How can we, as Christians [and relational beings], frame an honest and theologically tenable world-view to guide our lives and work in this perilous context?"[182]

This observation describes current conflict situations in some parts of the globe, traceable to the tension of misplaced values. Ethical problems have constantly reduced living standards in many sectors:

[182] Jürgen Moltmann, *Hope in These Troubled Times* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2019), vii.

education, politics and economy. For instance, most leaders and teachers in the educational system normalize various forms of malpractices in pursuit of students' excellent performance in examinations. Some students engage in several forms of moral misconducts to obtain high scores in internal and external examinations. Consequently, they become lazy with their studies, disregard hard work, play away their precious time, and indulge in truancy. There are other negative phenomena, which are common in the school system such as "decline in moral values, intolerance, increasing trend of hostility, violence and vandalism."[183] These and more ethical issues are also consequential to the values transmitted to the youths and children, even from the grassroots in family settings.

These ethical dilemmas also reflect at the leadership and government sectors. It is difficult to decode the underlying ethics behind the values that some leaders pursue in government. Is it self-interest, ethnic interest or agreed interest of the people? The result is a clash of values in political leadership. The Nigerian society in particular experiences clashes of norms and values due to misconstrued cultural and religious pluralism. In most cases, modern civilization and globalization tend to worsen the situation by undermining contextual ethical considerations. Currently, in the field of politics and economy, Nigeria as a nation lacks value-driven leadership and, consequently, a disoriented economy, which inflates the level of poverty for the masses and unemployment for the youth. In this "rough road" situation, who cares about ethics? [184] Every strategy for survival seems welcome; hence, values are either

[183] Chidiebere Onyia, "Training of New Teachers and Students on Ethics," in *Ethics in Higher Education: Foundation for Sustainable Development*. Obiora Ike and Chidiebere Onyia (Eds.), Geneva: Globethics.net, 2018, 591.

[184] Padmasiri de Silva, "Ethics for the Rough Road: Exploring New Dimensions for Interfaith Ethics," in *Sharing Values: A Hermeneutics for Global Ethics*, Ariane Hentsch Cisneros & Shanta Premawardhana (Eds.), Geneva: Globethics.net, 2011, 101.

being misplaced or stand the danger of going extinct. In addition, our elders always worry about the rate at which the younger generation are drifting away from instituted traditional values and norms, embracing values that clash with original, cultural value systems. Some young people condemn local languages and ways of life to embrace newer or foreign ones. This is applicable in virtually all other aspects of Nigerian culture. This trend has led to conflicts involving communities, ethnic groups and religious institutions.

The sphere of religion has also witnessed its share of conflicts. Crises of values are felt within and among churches in Nigeria. Apart from the Islam-Christian conflicts, which have resulted in massive loss of lives and properties, denominational conflicts in Nigeria call for effective sharing of values through dialogue. The Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Reformed/Presbyterian, Baptist, Pentecostals and African Instituted Churches exist in Nigeria with different religious values and norms. There is tendency for conflicts caused by denominational superiority and contempt for others. While we believed diversity to be a gift from God, it provokes conflict if we do not share our diverse values properly. Even when people engage in dialogue, more tensions and difficulties evolve owing to misconceptions and wrong/inappropriate approach.

This is where religion fuels conflict as discovered by Globethics.net third International Conference participants in Nairobi, Kenya January 2009. They discovered that many conflicts around the world are related to religious differences. According to Ariane Cisneros and Shanta Premawardhana,

> "While most agreed that religion can substantially contribute to global ethics, some felt that religion is itself a problem. However, since many conflicts are in some way related to religious

> differences, the organizers felt that special attention needed to be given to religions."[185]

This means that Globethics.net sets out to address social, political and religious conflicts through sharing values in dialogue. They identified different types of dialogues in ethics to include grassroots, institutional and academic dialogues. They specifically stressed a form of dialogue that is transformative to enable pragmatic shifts for peaceful coexistence and good neighbourhood.

The aim here is to state, through these stories, why ethics is important and relevant for ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. On the rough road of ethnic, cultural and religious conflicts, contemplative ethics is important in dialogue because it brings about change of attitude and enhances positive disposition towards difference. Therefore, this chapter will examine the need for transformative dialogue in Nigeria, explores the values needed to be nurtured and shared for such dialogue, as well as means of sharing such values. This chapter will also discuss religion as the honey-comb of African ethics and values.

Understanding Values in Global and Contextual Ethics

This section will focus on the clarification of concepts applicable to this chapter. The concepts used here are mostly global and contextual; they are also progressive in application from etymology to present time understanding of different terms in context. The description of concepts here may not be exhaustive; however, they indicate how they are useful for modern ethics. We will explore concepts like ethics, global and contextual ethics, values and value sharing, dialogue and transformative dialogue.

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[185] *Sharing Values: A Hermeneutics for Global Ethics*, 2011, op. cit., 29.

1.1 Ethics: Global and Contextual

Ethics are simply the principles of right and wrong values/norms. Values and norms are fundamental to global and contextual ethics. Both global and contextual ethical issues require certain values and norms. As Ariane and Shanta put it, "Global and contextual ethics are two poles that challenge each other and inseparably belong together…, [and] are based on values and norms."[186] However, while global ethics concerns common binding values based on the interdependent nature of the cosmos (for example, the universal consensus on human rights), contextual ethics focus on values located in specific contexts that are not global. Both contribute to each other and are drawn from values and norms.

1.2 Meaning of Values

Ariane and Shanta describe values as

> "Fundamental, long-term benchmarks of orientation, rooted in and justified by specific worldviews [while] norms are mid-term applications of values to specific contexts."[187]

Understanding that various ways of behaviour or actions that stem from particular worldview is important for addressing differences cutting across cultures. When a particular behavioural pattern crops up in any society, it is seen as a norm having been in place for some time. However, when it stays for long time, it becomes the value system of that society. Hence, the norm of honesty becomes a value when people exhibit honesty for some time in their daily lives. According to Lumen, "Values are abstract concepts that certain kinds of behaviours are good, right, ethical, moral and therefore desirable. In the United States, one

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[186] *Sharing Values*, ibid, 31-32.
[187] Ibid., 32.

value is freedom; another is equality."[188] Therefore, whatever is judged to be good constitutes values in any context. The meaning of ethics and values could be clearer from the differences between them. Some of these include the fact that:

- Ethics is a moral stance that helps society decide what is right and wrong. On the other hand, value is a perspective by which someone assesses the importance of everything
- Ethics is professional while values are personal
- Ethics is global or general while value is contextual or particular
- Ethics means set of moral principles, especially one relation to affirming a specified group, field or form of conduct. On the other hand, values are principles or standards of behaviour[189]
- Different professions, organizations institutes, etc. influence ethics, while family background, culture, religion, community, etc. influence values[190]
- Ethics can vary according to professions; values can vary according to individuals[191]
- Ethics determine what is right; Values determine what is important. Ethics is concerned about the correct action; values ask what to achieve.[192]

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[188] Lumen, *Cultural Anthropology,* https://courses.lumenlearning.com, accessed 12 March, 2020.

[189] Hasa, "Difference between Ethics and values," in *Epediaa*, 2016, Available at: https://pediaa.com/difference-between-ethics-and-values/ Accessed 1 August 2020.

[190] Ibid.

[191] Ibid.

[192] Ibid.

1.3 Dialogue: Formal and Informal

The term 'dialogue' comes from two Greek words, '*dia'* and '*logos,'* (*dialogos*), which means 'to converse.' Following this**,** Miriam Webster Dictionary defines dialogue as "an exchange of ideas and opinions" between two parties (individuals or groups). This term is widely used today especially within conflict situations. In that sense, it refers to the way of resolving conflict. As Cornelius Omonokhua describes it, "Dialogue is one of the many ways of achieving peace and managing conflicts."[193] He identifies several components of dialogue to include intra-personal, intra-community, and inter-religious dialogue. Globethics.net sees dialogue as sharing values in both formal and informal ways. Formal dialogue involves well-organized, inter-religious, and intercultural value sharing, while informal dialogue happens in daily life as people engage each other in discussions.[194] This means that dialogue refers to communication of one's values whether in formal or informal ways.

1.4 Value Sharing

Having established that values are long-term ways of behaviour informed by a particular worldview, value sharing simply means exchanging those ways of behaviour with others. The group report of Globethics.net's Nairobi Conference describes value sharing as means and methods of academic and non-academic discourses. It explains that effective value sharing must move from idealism to realism, meaning moving from academic discourse to other means like theatre, music, dancing, poetry, art, etc.[195] So, as behaviours are exchanged

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[193] Cornelius Omonokhua, *Dialogue in Context: A Nigerian Experience*, Kaduna: Virtual Insignia, 2014, 9.

[194] Globethics.net, *Globethics.net Principles on Sharing Values across Cultures and Religions*, Geneva: Globethics.net, 2012, 3.

[195] "Group Report from the 2009 Nairobi Conference" in *Sharing Values*, op. cit. pp. 375-93.

academically or through music, art, poetry and so on, value sharing is taking place.

1.5 Transformative Dialogue

This is a form of dialogue in which values are sought and identified, appreciated and respected, and shared for peace, tranquillity and justice among groups and individuals. Transformation is one of the goals of dialogue. It is a form of value sharing in dialogue, which aims at transforming both our values and other people's values or beliefs. According to Ariane and Shanta, "Such sharing can be most fruitful when the dialogue is intended to be transformative."[196] By this, they mean that value sharing in dialogue should push participants beyond where they are to new understanding. In modern scholarly parlance, it is called a pragmatic, programmatic or paradigm shift. This shift is important if we hope to make progress in our dialogue and interactions. Hence, transformative dialogue is that which helps parties involved to shift grounds and embrace new values, or modify their values based on richer information or understanding. This is the main focus of this work as we explore ecumenical and inter-religious dialogues. We shall examine the value of dialogue and religion as providing changes in the quality of people's interactions.

Religion and Value Sharing in the Context of Transformative Dialogue

This section examines how religion influences values to some extent. Most elements of our value system come from religion. Religion has an enormous effect on social life. In African context, for instance, John Mbiti had earlier referred to African people as religious people. He describes the entire facets of African life as highly influenced by

[196] Ibid. *Sharing Values,* p. 34.

religion. Their language, norms, beliefs, music, arts, marriage, festivals, etc. are influenced by religion.[197] Therefore, it is necessary to examine religion, and the influence it exerts on values before exploring dialogue as a tool for value sharing in subsequent sections. To achieve this, this section will simplify the meaning of religion, critique religion as well as expose how religion constitutes a root/source of values.

2.1 Meaning and Definitions of Religion

This is one concept that can be difficult to define or explained due to its nature of subjectivity. Let me present only five definitional perspectives here:

- 1. "[Religion is] the belief in Spiritual Beings" (Edward B Tylor, *Primitive Culture*)
- 2. "By religion, then, I understand a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life" (James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough*).
- 3. "[Religion is] the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine." (William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*)
- 4. "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them." (Émile Durkeim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*)

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[197] Mbiti, John *African Religions and Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, 391.

- 5. [Religion is] "the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concerns as preliminary, and a concern that in itself provides the answer to the question of the meaning of our existence."(Paul Tillich)[198]

2.2 Critique of Religion: A Double-edged Sword

Some researchers have come to conclusion that religion seems to be a double-edged sword. This is so because in their findings, it is said that the same religion that helps humans to find solace in God, also serves as avenue for perpetrating conflict, injustice and violence. Studies have shown that religion is at the base of most violence in the world. This is not only applicable to Christianity, but also other religions. As Ross Lee puts it

> "Besides Christianity, all world religions appear connected by the seeds and common threads of male patriarchy: a hypothetical social system based upon the absolute authority of the father or an elderly male over the family group."[199]

He was referring to the domestic violence supported by religions of the world. Along this axis is another critique of religion by the German Socialist, Karl Marx. It was a passing remark he made in 1843 which has become a celebrated dictum: that religion is the "opium of the people." Here, Marx argues that

> "Religion plays a significant role in maintaining the status quo by promising rewards in the after-life rather than in this life." In this way religion "works to calm uncertainty over our role in the

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[198] "Some Definitions of Religion" in https://www2.kenyon.edu. Accessed 13 March, 2020.

[199] Lee Ross, "Religion and Intimate Partner Violence: A Double-Edge Sword," in *ResearchGate, 2014,* available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/300369732_Religion_and_Intimate_Partner_Violence_A_DoubleEdge_Sword/link/5bb38ba192851ca9ed34107d/download. Accessed 14 August 2020.

> universe and in society." With this observation, he sees religion as "…a significant hindrance to reason, inherently masking the truth and misguiding followers".[200]

The above critiques present the not-so-good side of religion, because it gives the people who practice it an illusory happiness that seldom lasts. Another practical example from the Nigerian context is the divide between and among Christians, and the deep-seated fundamentalism perpetrated by the Boko Haram Islamic sects. The religious conflicts in Nigeria, which result in several forms of killings by this religious group, contradict Islam's belief as a religion of peace.

If values are drawn from religion, it follows that one must examine such values critically for ethical considerations. This exposes the need for transformative dialogue among religions. Another edge of religion is the fact that it serves as a harvest of values.

2.3 Religion – A Honey-comb of Values

The definition and practice of religion by scholars and adherents presents it as an embodiment of values. According to Obiora Ike, religion is that "which helps humans to realize themselves in their search for truth, peace, happiness and meaning beyond the immanent realities of the material world."[201] It is a tool through which the human person relates with the unseen and 'Transcendental Other' in order to find fulfilment in life. From this, we deduce that religion is a foundation for

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[200] "Karl Marx and the 'Opiate of the Masses: Abolition of Religion as the Illusory Happiness of the People," in 14.4A: Marx and the "Opiate of the Masses", *Social Science*, LibreText Libraries, (updated June 2020). Available at: https://socialsci.libretexts.org

[201] Chukwu Chinedu, *Obiora Ike in His Own Words: A Shot at Immortality, Thought on Culture, Ethics, Society, Religion and Politics*, Enugu, Nigeria: BuildingEwealth Info-Tech, 2016, 96. http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/166559

ethical values. Ekwunife Anthony defines religion from the context of African tradition as

> "…those institutionalized beliefs and practices of indigenous religion of Africa which are the result of traditional Africans" response to their believed revealing Superhuman Ultimate and which are rooted from time immemorial in the past African religious culture, beliefs and practices that were transmitted to the present votaries by successive African forebears mainly through oral traditions (myths, and folktales, songs and dances, liturgies, rituals, proverbs, pithy sayings, names and oaths), sacred specialists and persons, sacred space, objects and symbols, a religion which is slowly but constantly updated by each generation in the light of new experiences through the dialectical process of continuities and discontinuities".[202]

From the African, traditional, and religious point of view, the principles and practical guide to life (for instance, the moral conscience), find their roots in the African communitarian ethics, embedded in African religion. 'Communion' in 'Community' is the umbrella that binds Africans together in their cultivation and practice of values, with the family as their take-off point. For instance, in his work, Ezekwonna Ferdinand discusses "some aspects of Igbo communitarian ethics as it relates to moral conscience and autonomy of the individual."[203] For Ezekwonna, the *Igbo* culture and religion is the basis for the moral conscience and autonomy of the individual in that it showcases ethical values such as "the community model…that fosters good moral values, individual freedom and autonomy and…makes

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[202] Ekwunife, Anthony O., *Consecration in Igbo Traditional Religion*, Jet Publisher, 1990.

[203] Ezekwonna, Ferdinand, *African Communitarian Ethic: The Basis for the Moral Conscience and Autonomy of the Individual: Igbo Culture as a Case Study*, Bern: Peter Lang: 2005.

human beings more human."[204] Other values that sprang from this include truth and honesty, integrity, responsibility, love and respect for the individual, etc., which later spread wider to become ethical norms for human rights and social justice. The point here is that the Igbo (Eastern Nigerian) culture is an example from the African context, of rich values shared in communion with one another and with the community and other cultures. During this period, there is an aura of peace, tranquillity and harmony in the society.

Christianity, the religion of the followers of Jesus Christ, is another basis that harvests numerous gospel values. The highest value that Christians are enjoined to emulate is the meekness and humility of Jesus, their model. Other Christian values include compassion, patience, mercy, peace, tolerance, self-control, forgiveness, and above all, brotherly love (Matt. 5; 11:29ff; Col. 3:12-16). In fact, the Holy Bible is regarded as the Christians' moral code for living ethically even on this planet earth.

Other world religions have one value or the other that mark their common grounds with other religions. The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) in her *Declaration on the Church in her Relation to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate, 1965)* enumerated certain values that the Roman Catholic Church admires, appreciates and respects, and has in common with other religions. According to the council, the Church, "in her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations…considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship."[205] The Council recognizes other religions as a "community of all peoples," with God as their "one

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[204] Ibid.

[205] Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on the Church in her Relation to Non-Christian Religions: Nostra Aetate*, 1965, no. 1. Available at: https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html. Accessed 14 August 2020.

origin and final goal… who provides and manifests his goodness and saving designs to all men."[206] Common motives stimulate the practice of all religions as the council observes in the following lines:

> "Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men: What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what is sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to true happiness? What are death, judgment and retribution after death? What, finally, is that ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?"[207]

Among these religions, there is also common "recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrates their lives with a profound religious sense."[208] The declaration pays particular attention to the commonalities between Christians and Muslims, despite their many years of quarrels and hostilities:

> "The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth,(5) who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honour Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the Day of

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[206] Ibid., no. 1.
[207] Ibid., no. 1.
[208] Ibid., no. 2.

> Judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting."[209]

Although religion is criticized as a double-edged sword, this essay focuses on the positive side to highlight the values inherent therein. It is these values, which cut across cultures that people, groups, and other religions seek to recognize, appreciate, and share when they embrace dialogue organized in praxis. It could be a model for peace and coexistence among Nigerian Christians, and between Christians and other religions, like Islam.

The Praxis of Dialogue as a Means of Sharing Values

Dialogue is about value sharing. This chapter presents practical ways of sharing values for transformative dialogue. It will examine how transformative dialogue is organized, the idea of contemplative ethics, as well as value needed for transformative dialogue. It will show the relevance of ethics or value sharing in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

3.1 How to Organize Transformative Dialogue

Scholars have suggested practical ways of organizing transformative dialogue. Kenneth Gergen et al suggest a bottom top approach. According to them, "Rather than working "top down" - with high level authorities or abstract systems laying out the rules, ethics or practices for all - let us proceed "bottom up." That is, let us move to the world of action, and specifically to cases in which people seem to be wrestling with problems of multiple and conflicting realities, and doing so without

[209] Ibid., no. 3.

strong commitment to either rationalist or realist premises."[210] This shows that flowing from people's realities makes the dialogue practically transformative. On their part, Ariane and Shanta outline some ways of organizing a transformative dialogue to include the following:

- Cultivating strong personal relationships
- Establishing an innovative methodology of preparation
- Creating a safe zone
- Interrogating self-understanding
- Exploring the self-understanding of the other, hence, clarifying misconceptions.
- Providing adequate time and space
- Organize gender-diverse dialogues
- Engaging between religious and non-religious ethics[211]

If these steps are properly followed, transformative dialogue could be achieved.

3.2 A Contemplative Ethics: From the Soul to the Senses

The concept of contemplative ethics was coined by a Catholic Theologian known as Dennis J. Billy. He was concerned about the relationship between catholic spirituality and moral theology. According to him, while contemplation concerns inner reasoning, ethics focuses on practical principles of daily life. Hence, both terms could seem contradictory, but the idea is that they relate in what could be described as moving from the soul to the senses. Billy puts it this way,

> "Contemplation, for me, is a wordless, thoughtless pondering of an object in childlike wonder….Ethics has to do with a focused

[210] Kenneth Gergen, S. McNamee and Frank Barrett, "Towards a Vocabulary of Transformative Dialogue," in *International Journal of Public Administration* (2001): 24, 697-707.
[211] *Sharing Values*, ibid. 36-37.

> application of concrete principles to daily life…. contemplative ethics describes the ultimate relationship between Catholic spirituality and moral theology."[212]

It could be seen as the process of transferring the interior gaze of the soul on the divine goodness to practical human action. Our spirituality would not be complete without corresponding ethics and morality. Hence, Padmasiri de Silva admonishes that,

> "In developing a contemplative ethics, we have to confer a sense of majesty and clinical sacredness on our routine lives – the moment-to-moment flow of life that comes within the range of mindfulness practice."[213]

3.3 Values Needed for Transformative Dialogue

One of the Scholars deeply concerned with values to be nurtured for transformative dialogue was Dr. Ada Gonzalez. She describes it as transformative conversations. For her, dialogue is a special kind of conversation that permits and invites change. It is impossible to engage in it and come out the same. Effective dialogue transforms because of its dynamic, interactive, and inclusive nature, and creates deeper understanding and meaning. Gonzalez explains that a transformative conversation allows you to see the world in new ways and to make better sense of it. It helps to shape the present and future reality through the connection and collaboration of minds. It can lead to unprecedented transformation for you, your partner, and your business. She listed values needed as follows:

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[212] Dennis Billy, *Contemplative Ethics: An Introduction* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2011), 3.

[213] Padmasiri de Silva, "Ethics for the Rough Road…", 106.

- Create a culture of open communication.
- Conduct effective meetings with actionable results.
- Implement and facilitate change effectively.
- Interact better with international colleagues.
- Create the future instead of reacting to what happens.
- Have more collaboration through the organization.
- Increase productivity and revenue.
- Connect with colleagues, direct reports, and customers, increasing your influence.[214]

When we apply these values in any dialogical conversation, it brings transformation. However, the above values may not only be global, they can also be contextual. They do not exhaust the list of values needed for transformative dialogue. Ariane and Shanta added to the list values such as honesty, deep listening, walking in the other's shoes, suspending judgment, appreciating others' beliefs and values, being self-critical of one's own beliefs, as well as acting in openness and transparency.[215]

3.4 Application to the Nigerian Context

The application of the above discourse to the context of Nigeria is the purpose of this sub-section. How would Nigeria as a nation approach dialogue for transformation? What contemplative ethics could Christianity and other religions in Nigeria apply to achieve this goal, especially amidst tension and fear that is looming therein now? On average, most Nigerians suffer more from religious-political, ethno-religious, and politico-economic crises than from the current global COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdown of activities has becomes an opportunity of secret preparations for another religious conflict between Christians and Muslims, and between the Northern, Western and South-

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[214] Ada Gonzalez, *Transformative Conversations: The Heart of the Leadership Journey*, Lisbon: Logos Noesis, 2015, 24.
[215] *Sharing Values*, ibid. 34-36.

Eastern regions of Nigeria. This, coupled with political and economic imbalance, heightens the agitation for independence by some sections of the country (for instance, the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra, IPOB). For the average Nigerian, the fear of being killed in the name of religion is much graver than the anxiety of surviving the pandemic.

This being the case, how does one introduce the form of dialogue that could possibly enhance peace, justice and harmony as fruits of transformation in a nation heated up by confused tension? It is confused between interplay of religion and politics. In the religious sphere, Christians are not united within, among and between themselves. Divided by theological, doctrinal and liturgical differences, it is difficult to come together for dialogue in a country often torn between intolerance and religious dogmatism. As a saying goes, 'charity begins at home.' There is urgency for Nigerian Christians to come together as one, in unity and ecclesial communion. For this to be possible, we re-echo the call for strengthening of the spirit of ecumenism, that is, the promotion of Christian unity. Thus united, they can create successful dialogue with Islam, in a way that may promote peaceful coexistence and understanding. Unfortunately, the ecumenical situation in Nigeria calls for a reconsideration of the purpose of ecumenism. As Daniel Ude Asue observed, "although the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) was formed to promote unity among the various Christian denominations in the country, it has not been able to achieve its goal."[216]

An ecumenical approach that could be helpful in addressing Nigeria's current situation is that which a Catholic, Systematic Theology Professor, Paul Murray calls Receptive Ecumenism. It is another dimension of moving from the soul to the senses.

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[216] Ude Asue, D. (2016), "Ecumenical Tensions among Nigerian Christians". *International Review of Mission*, 105: 306-320. https://doi.org/10.1111/irom.12152

> This is "a fresh ecumenical methodology emphasizing receptivity, learning, and listening. It is about learning from other Christians in order to learn about ourselves. It is a process of conversion, and openness to the Holy Spirit."[217]

In this approach, each dialogue group (or church tradition as the case may be) focuses more on *learning* or *receiving from* rather than *teaching* or *convincing* the other. It follows a 'receptive learning' process, using a tool called 'explicit ecclesial self-critique.' According to Antonia Pizzey, Receptive Ecumenism is "an approach which seeks to make ecumenical progress by learning from our partner, rather than asking our partner to learn from us."[218]

The central idea of Receptive Ecumenism is the unrealistic nature of the full visible unity of Christians. The core concern is that too often, churches approach dialogue with an instinctive, default question: "what do our various *others first* need to learn from us…?"[219] Hence, the fundamental principle is that churches and groups who engage in dialogue make a pragmatic shift by reversing the question into "what can we learn from others…" The basic assumption and underlying conviction about this alternative dialogue approach is that, if all churches and dialogue partners asked the question of what to learn from, rather than what to teach others, then ecumenical progress is possible. Receptive Ecumenism is a strategy of renewed disposition in which churches make a shift from former '*self-defending'* and *'convincing-the-*

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[217] Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, "What is Receptive Ecumenism?" (2017), available at: https://about.csu.edu.au/community/accc/projects/2017-conference-receptive-ecumenism/conference. Accessed 20 May 2020.

[218] Pizzey, Antonia. *Receptive Ecumenism and the Renewal of the Ecumenical Movement: The Path of Ecclesial Conversion*, Boston: Printforce, 2019, 208.

[219] Murray, Paul. "Receptive Ecumenism and Catholic Learning: Establishing the Agenda," in *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church.* 7.4, 2007, 279.

other' positions to an *open-minded readiness and less argumentative stances.* It has a positive outlook on ecclesial differences. In Receptive Ecumenism, the ecclesial, theological and other differences that divide churches become mutually recognized, respected, admired and received as gifts to enrich, rather than diminish ecclesial identity. This changes the dictum from 'better to *give* than to *receive'* to 'more dignifying to *learn* or *receive* than to *give'*. Therefore, it encourages the spirit of learning and of receiving gifts.

The approach of Receptive Ecumenism was implemented in a recent bilateral dialogue known as Third Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC III); to explore in what ways this approach could possibly promote and enrich ecumenical engagements and dialogues. In the first Agreed Statement of ARCIC III titled *Walking Together on the Way, Learning to be the Church-Local, Regional, Universal*,[220] the participants of the Anglican Communion and Roman Catholic Church applied the receptive learning process of 'explicit ecclesial self-critic'. In this process, they discovered their commonalities and respective internal tensions, and considered potentials for receptive learning from one another. This shows that Receptive Ecumenism could be useful in bilateral dialogues.

Apart from the challenges of religious and ethnic pluralism, Christian churches in Nigeria need the self-critical receptive learning strategy of Receptive Ecumenism for inner conversion and growth, in a transformative ecumenical dialogue. This involves emphasizing the need for ecclesial repentance, openness and conversion.

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[220] Third Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, *Walking Together on the Way: Learning to Be Church-Local, Regional, Universal*; An Agreed Statement of the Third Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission London. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. 2018. Available at: http://www.prounione.it/dia/arcic/Dia-ARCIC-17-III-walking.pdf. Last accessed May 21, 2020.

Another basis is that this new dialogue approach is an

> "…ethical strategy which represents a "way of ecumenical ecclesial conversion and growth that is both remarkably simple in vision and remarkably far-reaching in potential."[221]

Because it involves change, we need to understand that change is not easy to come by, and so need certain basics and core values to curb the mind-set of Nigerian Christians and pre-dispose churches, individuals and groups towards learning and reception.

This also calls for a formal reception of ARCIC documents in Nigerian Anglican-Roman Catholic levels of communion, especially at local communities;[222] mutual receptive learning through explicit ecclesial self-critique; possible application of ARCIC III recommendations,[223] and some practical suggestions where each party can learn from the other even at the grassroots. This could enhance ecumenical disposition, strengthen ecclesial communion, and unite Nigerian Christians for a successful and peaceful dialogue with Islam.

Finally, we recommend receptive ecumenism for Nigeria both as a type of contemplative ethic, and also as an ecumenical disposition and attitude that could enhance the sharing of values in a transformative dialogue. It disposes churches to develop positive attitudes towards their differences, and to cultivate values for their basic ecclesial needs. This disposition must begin with mutual recognition of one another as brothers and sisters in Christ despite differences and obstacles. Receptive Ecumenism's journey inside out re-motivates, re-energizes

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[221] Paul Murray, cited by University of Stockholm, in "About Receptive Ecumenism: The Basic Idea," last accessed April 3, 2020, https://www.ehs.se/receptive-ecumenism/about-receptive-ecumenism**.**

[222] For a full list of the Agreed Statements of ARCIC, visit www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/angl-commdocs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20050516_mary-grace-hope-christ_en.html.

[223] ARCIC III, *Walking Together on the Way,* no. 103.

and redirects the churches' ecumenical enthusiasm. It is a disposition, with patience and courage, to take the rough path and the road less travelled. It is a disposition of stooping low in humility to address ecclesial tensions in the face of the other. Receptive Ecumenism's conversion process disposes churches to take the Gospel imperatives seriously, to cultivate the positive 'attitudes' of the Beatitudes, and emulate Christ in his humble *kenosis.* In this self-emptying, they die to ecclesial superiority, self-sufficiency and criticism of the other, and rise up to ecclesial dignity, growth, development and renewal. This dialogue model is recommended, not only for Anglicans and Roman Catholics in Nigeria, but also for all Christian traditions, and other religions, especially Islam. If the tenets of Receptive Ecumenism is applied in and by Nigerians, peace will return, and differences seen as values to share with one another.

According to Vatican II Fathers, "religions…have struggled to answer the same questions by means of more refined concepts and a more developed language."[224] This is where we differ from one another, in context, and in the use of concept and language. In themselves, these religious groups have values to admire and appreciate. However, unless we come close to one another through dialogue, we cannot recognize these values.

Therefore, a reverberation of the exhortation of the Vatican II Fathers could suffice here,

> "…that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men."[225]

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[224] Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate, no. 2*

[225] Ibid., no. 2.

This could bring some level of transformation in Nigeria. This calls for discipline and maturity to overlook my partner's weakness, and in a self-critical examination process, focus on my own shortcomings.

Conclusion

This work has argued for sharing of values in dialogue for transformation in the Nigerian context. It is now clear that ecumenical and interreligious dialogue can adopt certain values and value sharing means and methods to make them transformative. For dialogue to be transformative, the values of honesty, openness, respect for other's beliefs, not being judgmental, being self-critical, and so on are needed. These values come from religion and must help to transform us and others. Therefore transformative dialogue can happen in formal or informal forms. Yet, the aim will be to push us to a new understanding, knowledge, and practice based on a renewed worldview. Value breeds value when it embraces, and allows itself to be sharpened by ethics, thereby becoming no longer contextual but global ethics. Ethical values of responsibility, listening, discipline, receptive learning, and courage, openness, and accepting shortcomings are indispensable for disposing Nigerians towards attitudes of reception and learning from one another in dialogue. These are the contemplative ethics for the rough road of economic and political crises, championed by religious fundamentalism and dogmatism. Nigerians are called to interior conversion in an inward journey, and for Christians especially, a journey that leads to ridding to whatever does not approve of peace and justice, and rising to tolerance and coexistence in a 'live and let live' environment. For this reason, Nigerians need to care about ethics, since ethics enhances navigation for peace and justice. If this is done, there is a dignified future for Nigeria.

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