

Critical Reflection on the Human Nature and the African Underdevelopment

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Abstract

African countries can at best be said to be underdeveloped. Graciously, however, they are said to be developing countries. But the indices of underdevelopment far outweigh the ones that designate them as developing. Compared to the developed world, African countries appear to be retrogressing by the day. This is worrisome. And many have wondered aloud the source of this precarious and parlous situation in which the Africans have found themselves. Some have identified it as a lack of true and committed leadership; for others, it is the faulty constitutions, lack of respect for the rule of law, corruption, etc. Some solutions have been proffered on how to burst the shackles of African underdevelopment. But the more fundamental question is to ask whether there is anything in African man that resists development. Is the nature of the African man different from the rest of humanity? This paper reflects critically and analytically on human nature. It notes that Africans do not possess anything less of all that make up the contents of human nature. They simply have to begin their development process through the use of their indigenous economic model, just like the rest of the developed world did.

Keywords

Human Nature, Reason, Development, Peace

1. Introduction

Human beings are found in different locations on the earth. The quality of life that they enjoy is, however, not the same; for some, it is high, others low, and yet for others, it is the mean between both. It is on account of this that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) classifies countries into three categories, namely, developed, economies in transition, and developing economies. African countries are in the class of developing economies. Many factors are be-

lieved to be responsible for their remaining in this category. They include poor leadership, ethnicity, corruption, lack of sense of duty, etc. But of all these and many more, leadership is said to be the major cause. Indeed, E. E. Idike says categorically that “Leadership is the greatest problem of Africa.” (Idike, 1998: p. 139). But then, some African countries had good leaders like Nelson Mandela, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, etc. But these were not able to lift their respective countries away from their status as developing economies. And so, the search for the cause must continue. Perhaps the poor developing status of the African countries may stem from their having a kind of human nature that is different from that of the rest of human beings. This is not likely. Human nature is absolutely the same for all; it is the same human nature that is the main driving force behind the various developments being observed in different parts of the world. But if it is the same, why then are Africans lagging behind in terms of development? Why is the same human nature shared by all human beings not served as a fillip in driving development in Africa? Is it because Africans possess less of human nature?

This paper examines, critically and analytically, the notion of human nature; it examines that which differentiates human beings essentially from other beings. It claims that Africans do not possess anything less of human nature. The failure to achieve rapid development as witnessed today in African countries is not grounded in their humanity. It is equally not a result of the misapplication of their humanity to something averse to development. They were in the process of development when their indigenous model of development was forcefully halted and replaced with a model alien to them. The result was a disaster. There is a need to dismantle the antithetical structures that hamstring development and replace them with a viable indigenous economic model. This paper offers one such traditional economic model.

2. The Human Nature

The world is full of complexities; it is a container of perplexities. Every one of its contents is a mystery, a marvel, and, to a large extent, incomprehensible. The contents of the world are classified into various forms, for example, genus and species. But at the respective levels of each classification, differences abound. Man (a human species), for instance, belongs to the animal class (genus) because of the attributes which he shares with other animals within the animal kingdom. He differs from them, however, in many ways than one. This means he has a nature that is distinct from animals.

Among great thinkers, there are disagreements on human nature. For Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas, human nature is basically the same for all human beings. Their philosophical systems are built on this assumption. For Frederick Nietzsche, however, human nature is not the same for all. For him, every person has his own human nature. And since this is the case, he rejects the idea of the possibility of universal objective moral law for all (Stumpf, 1983: p.

360). Jean Paul Sartre appears to indirectly arrive at the same conclusion. He denies that at birth man is created by God with a determinate human nature (Omogbe, 2003: pp. 252-253). For him, it is man that gives himself nature; he has the unlimited freedom to make himself the way he wants to be. But then, if everyone is the architect of his own nature, the implication is that there are diverse forms of human nature. And if this is the case, there cannot be universal moral law for all. Sartre endorses this consequence, for he is a professed antinomian.

These authors, who believe in the multiplicity of human nature, are simply actors in the theatre of the absurd. Antinomianism or rather the denial of the universal objective moral law is not the sole consequence of this absurdity. It also casts doubt on human communication. How can human beings communicate with one another if everyone has his own nature? Again, the belief that man is a social, political, religious and cultural being is also called to question. How can these work out in practice when human beings do not have the same nature? It is incomprehensible and it is obviously against common sense and what is obtainable in concrete life experience. Human beings have common nature that distinguishes them from other beings. There is a plethora of things in human nature that makes it distinct from other beings.

Human nature is a polysemous concept. To understand its contents, it is necessary to examine it as an organic entity. Like any organism, human nature is constituted of parts. The ideas that are contained in it are: reason, will, freedom, thinking, self-consciousness, emotion, duty, sympathy, etc. These are some of the attributes within the extension of the term human nature. They are the defining features of human nature. This is why one can say that man is a rational being, he is a willing being; he is a free being, he is a thinking being, he is a self-conscious being, he is an emotional being, he is a duty conscious being, he is a sympathetic being, etc. The "is" here is not one of identity. It does not mean that if man is a thinking being, for example, he cannot be any other thing. Thinking is simply one of the human attributes that distinguish him from other beings.

In any organism, however, there is always a part that has dominance or pre-eminence over others. It is this dominant part that activates these other parts and makes them function effectively and harmoniously for the overall good of the organism. In human nature, the dominant idea is reason. It is reason that concatenates the other ideas in the concept of human nature and makes them meaningful. Freedom, for instance, is an idea in the concept of human nature. But it cannot be a distinctive feature of man if its operation is not guided by reason. Indeed, we cannot reasonably talk of freedom without reason. Freedom without reason is a farce; it is inane, and it does not exist. The same is true with other ideas inherent in the concept of human nature.

Plato and Aristotle affirm reason as a special feature of man. Both maintain that the human soul consists of parts. For Plato, these parts are the rational, the spirited, and the vegetative parts (Plato, 1983: pp. 209-224). The rational part is

particularly the distinctive element in human nature. It is superior to the other two elements. Plato believes that the spirited and vegetative elements ought to subject themselves to the control of the rational part. The pre-eminence and nobility which Plato attaches to the rational part of the soul are seen in his politics. He divides the citizens in a state into three classes, following the three parts of the soul analogically. These are the rulers, the guardians and the artisans. While the rulers correspond to the rational part of the soul, the guardians and the artisans correspond respectively to the spirited and vegetative parts. For Plato, those to rule or govern are the philosophers; they are in full possession of reason. And so, the sovereignty of the state should rest on their shoulders.

Aristotle, though he believes that reason is the dominant element in human nature, does not endorse the view that sovereignty should be reposed on the rulers. His ground for holding tenaciously to this view is because they may be swayed away by passions, and veer away from the end of the state. They may not be insulated from the buffeting tide of passions even with their depth of knowledge and outstanding virtues. For Aristotle, the sovereign authority ought to be reposed on the law. It is reasonable to do so. The law is not a respecter of persons. It is there for the lowly and the mighty, the poor and the rich, the ruler and the subject. Anyone, who flouts it, is punished accordingly. Affirming the superiority of law and its identity with reason, Aristotle says “He therefore that recommends that law shall govern seems to recommend that God and reason alone shall govern.” (Aristotle, 1990: p. 265). Aristotle says that when people are appointed or elected to serve as executives in a state, their function is to respect and uphold the rule of law and submit themselves to it. Nevertheless, a synthesis of Plato and Aristotle’s positions is important for the state. This is because a good ruler without good laws or good laws without a good ruler cannot lead a state to a political paradise.

Descartes, the father of modern rationalism, believes equally in the power of reason, that true knowledge can be acquired through reason. He affirms the essential nature of man as a thinking being. He unambiguously expresses this when he says, “But what therefore am I? A thinking thing. What is that? I mean a thing that doubts, that understands, that affirms, that denies, that wishes to do this and does not wish to do that, and also that imagines and perceives” (Descartes, 2008: p. 20). All these attributes which distinguish man from other beings presuppose man’s possession of reason or the ability to think. Reason underlines these qualities and makes the activities they characterise human activities. One, for example, cannot affirm or deny, doubt or understand, etc., without reasoning or thinking.

Nevertheless, there are some thinkers who tend to place freedom over and above reason in the hierarchical contents of human nature. Indeed, Hegel says that freedom is the essence of man (Hegel, 1991: p. 117). It is on the basis of this that he lends his support for the transportation of the Africans as slaves to Europe, even though he abhors and loathes the idea of slavery. He asserts that Af-

ricans would not realise their freedom, which is the essence of their nature if they remained in Africa. The assumption of this assertion is that Europe would afford them the opportunity of being educated, which, in turn, would make them aware of their freedom. Be that as it may, it must be pointed out that for one to gain knowledge through education, presupposes that one has the capacity to reason. It is bizarre to speak of freedom as the essence of man when the awareness of this freedom is dependent on something that is much more fundamental, namely, the capacity to reason. Freedom is part of the essence of human nature, and not that it is identical to human nature.

Like Hegel, Sartre accentuates human freedom. But unlike him, he does not consider it as an essence of human nature. For him, man has no determinate nature. Sartre derives freedom from the consciousness of the self. He divides the realities in the world into two: *l'être-en-soi* and *l'être-le-pour soi* (Sartre, 1966: p. 25). *L'en soi* is the thing-in-itself; it is an unconscious being, and it has determinate nature. *Le pour soi*, on the other hand, is a thing-for-itself. It is a self-conscious being; it has no determinate nature. Man is this self-conscious being. And because he is conscious of himself, he can foresee or imagine action in the future, cogitate about its feasibility and utility, and work towards its actual execution. But he cannot execute what he has planned to accomplish if he does not have the freedom to do so. So, Sartre derives human freedom from the consciousness of the being-for-itself. But it must be pointed out that reason is ontologically and chronologically prior to freedom. It is the reason that makes an action to be something worthy to be embarked upon. It is prior to the actual exercise of freedom. So, reason is unassailably the main defining feature in the concept of human nature.

3. Controversies on Reason

Reason as a distinct attribute of human nature has been trailed by controversies. The bone of contention is how it is distributed among human beings. Plato believes it is equitably distributed between men and women. Aristotle, through his hylomorphism, arrived at a different conclusion. He affirms that men are superior to women because in anything that is composed of parts, there is always a superior part. On the basis of this, he maintains that the power of deliberation, for example, which is carried out with reason, is not the same for both sexes. Furthermore, he believes men and women possess the various parts of the soul differently. And accordingly, they differ in virtues such as temperance, justice and courage that are derivable from these parts of the soul. Because of his claim on the superiority of men over women, he maintains that men ought inexorably to rule and that women are to be ruled (Aristotle, 1990: p. 21). The critics of Aristotle have dubbed him as a misogynist.

Aristotle's disparaging remarks against women attracted virulent and vitriolic criticisms. Of particular interest is the scathing vituperation of Lucrezia Marinella in her book, *The Nobility and Excellence of Women and Defects of Men*. In

this book, she tended not only to point out the chink in the amour of Aristotle's argument and invalidate it but also to prove that women are in many ways superior to men. If they are superior, it follows that their power of reason is superior to men's. Marinella believes that both men and women share the same human nature, for they are created by the same God. But their share of this differs in many ways than one. The differences point to the superiority of women to men (Marinella, 1999: pp. 54-68). Some of these differences include: first, that man was created out of mud, but the woman was fashioned out of the rib. The assumption is that the rib is certainly more refined than the mud. Second, that women are more beautiful than men. Here, she uses Aristotle's hylomorphism and Plato's theory of forms to expatiate this point and lend credence to it. Relying on Aristotle's hylomorphism, she claims that the beauty of the body is a reflection of the soul. That is to say, the nobility of the soul is what appears in the body. Just like the sun permeates and radiates the earth and lights up the beauty in creatures, so does the beauty of the soul permeate the body and manifests itself in the beauty of the woman's body. To buttress her point further she reverts to Plato's theory of forms. She claims that the beauty of the body is a reflection of eternal beauty. And since the reflection of this beauty is not the same in both men and women, the body of women in which there is a preponderance of this eternal beauty is certainly superior to men's body. This evident superiority attests to the superior nature of women's souls. Third, Marinella maintains that women's beauty is beneficial, for the contemplation of their beauty leads to God, who is the source and origin of their beauty. Fourth, she asserts that the very fact that women are superior to men is the reason why men must always love them, but women need not love men. People love something that is superior and not something that is inferior. Hence, if women's nature is superior to that of men, it follows, *ipso facto* and ineluctably that their power of reason is greater than that of men.

The controversy on reason is not only on whether the men are in possession of it more than the women or vice versa. It has been extended to racial discussions. Kant, for example, affirms that rationality is possessed by all human beings but at varying degrees. The level of rationality of each species of human beings is manifest in the colour of the skin. According to Eze, Kant classifies humans into Europeans, Asians, Blacks and American Indians (Eze, 1997: p. 115). The respective colours of their skins, in the descending order of their rationality, are as follows: white is for the Europeans, yellow for the Asians, black for the Africans and red for the American Indians.

However, the classification of humans, according to the degree of rationality, which is believed to be evidenced in skin colour, is arbitrary; it does not reflect historical and empirical facts. If the Europeans are in full possession of rationality, then civilisation should have started in the West. The first civilisation, however, started rather in Egypt and Mesopotamia (the present Iraq). Civilisation started in the East and spread to the West through the trade contact which the people of Crete in Greece made with the Egyptians (Quest, 1973: p. 3). Besides

this evidence, Pythagoras went to Egypt in search of knowledge. He was urged by Thales to go there for further studies, and meet the Memphian and the Diospolitan priests who were his own former instructors (Iamblichus, 1918: p. 8).

Further indisputable evidence to eclipse Kant's arbitrary classification is what Aristotle says in his *Politics*. Here, he recognises Egypt as the oldest state with the oldest political establishment. He makes this acknowledgment while speaking on already established political institutions. According to him, "The antiquity of all of them is indicated by the history of Egypt; for the Egyptians are reputed to be the oldest of nations, but have already had laws and political system. Hence, we should use the results of the previous discovery when adequate, while endeavouring to investigate matters hitherto passed over." (Aristotle, 1990: p. 581). How can Kant claim that the Europeans are in full possession of rationality, even when they were not the first to establish political institutions and legislate proper laws? Even contemporary experience has rendered Kant's claim nebulous and odious. In some academic institutions, it is on record that Asians, Blacks and American Indians comprehend faster, and perform better academically, than Europeans.

Besides, reflecting on Kant's own philosophy, there is no way one can say that the Europeans are the prototype of humanity because they possess rationality to the fullest. In Kant's philosophy, reason and morality are not separable. A good action, according to him, is one that is universalizable; it is an action that is performed for the sake of duty and not in consideration of any consequential benefits. On the strength of this, can we say that the trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonisation of Africa are good? Are these actions universalizable? They are not. And yet these actions were carried out by the Europeans who were supposed to be pre-eminently rational and the quintessence of humanity. Again, World War I and II were caused in Europe. Is this an instantiation of rationality or irrationality? In World II, America detonated two atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which killed more than 152,000 people. The bombs were estimated to have been manufactured at the cost of about 2 billion dollars. No other species of human beings have deployed such a lethal instrument of mass destruction in warfare. And yet this was done by a race that claims to be more rational than the rest.

The policy of the former American President, Donald Trump, enfeebles Kant's moral philosophy. His policy is "America First". Is this policy universalizable? It is certainly not. It is self-defeating. If it is adopted as a universal law, it signals the end of international co-operation and negotiation. How can the world, for example, co-operate to fight global warming with Trump's policy? Indeed, Trump pulled America away from Kyoto agreement. Supposing other countries pulled out as well? Kant would certainly not have endorsed Trump's action as an instance to consolidate his claim that the Europeans are paradigmatic in terms of rationality and rational expression.

Rationality is meant to be used to solve human problems and improve the quality of human life. It needs to be deployed in inventing things that aim to-

wards this end. Things like gunpowder, printing, Mariner's compass and turbine, were not invented by the Europeans. Turbine was invented by Tibet, while the gunpowder, printing and Mariner's compass were made by the Chinese (Trevor-Roper, 1965: p. 23). They were the trail-blazers. These inventions were later appropriated by the Europeans. It took about 500 years, for example, before Chinese printing came to Europe. If the Europeans were really more intelligent than others, it is expected they would have been the first to invent these things. But they appropriated these inventions and used them for their own ends. Chukwuokolo holds that societies vary in their use of reason. This, according to him, is because societies have different worldviews and channel their reason toward those ends. Tibetans, for example, who invented the turbines, used them for "the rotation of prayer-wheels", while Europeans used them to produce electricity. (Chukwuokolo, 2011: p. 176). The Europeans used gunpowder in warfare and the Mariner's compass in their expansionist and exploitative program. Chukwuokolo, however, misses the point. Rationality is given to man, not to be used to dominate others, but to co-operate with them to ensure peace and the general well-being and happiness of all and sundry. It is not for domination and exploitation as is witnessed in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and colonisation. So, Chukwuokolo's claim that the Europeans used these inventions for their expansionist end that seem progressive is totally not in order.

So far, what is being argued above is that there are: 1) a lot of things that are the distinguishing features of humanity, 2) that reason is the first among them, 3) that no one can affirm and absolutely justify that the men or the women, or any race is in possession of reason more than others. This last point needs to be further bolstered by some empirical facts. There are people who now change their gender, from male to female and vice versa. There are others who change the colour of their skin from black to white, and from white to black. There are some Europeans who prefer to live and work in Africa because they find the Africans more reasonable than their fellow compatriots. The converse is also true.

The problem of COVID-19 vaccinations is additional and indisputable evidence that the possession of more or less reason cannot easily be decided one way or another. There are people who refuse to take COVID-19 vaccinations based on their belief that the vaccines are being manufactured with human embryos. These embryos are perhaps those of anonymous mothers, who may be Americans, Asians, Africans and American Indians. Those who refuse the vaccines do so on the ground that these vaccines would change their DNA; they would make them behave like the DNA of those embryos used in the manufacture of the vaccines. The implication of this is that they would not like to change to any other race whose rationality is presumably less than theirs. What one can conclude from all these is that it is extremely difficult to demonstrate that the possession of full rationality is a special preserve of one species of human beings. Accordingly, it cannot be legitimately claimed that Africans or any species of

human beings possess less of reason; this factor that is central to human nature.

4. Reason and Africans

The power of reason given to human beings is meant to guide them on how to collaborate with one another to ensure corporate existence, provide peace, security, progress, respect the dignity of every person, enthrone brotherhood, care, love in the community, etc. This literally means the dethronement and eradication of conflicts, hate, acrimony and recrimination in all its ramifications. The function of reason is carefully articulated by John Locke when he says “reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions.” (Locke, 1980: p. 9). This assertion spells out in unequivocal terms the function of reason in social life, namely, to be used to protect “life, health, liberty or possessions”. The function of reason as explained by Locke can be used as a parameter to measure the level of rationality possessed by traditional Africans. We can use the Igbo nation to access this.

The Igbo place a high value on life. Due to this, birth and death are accompanied by ritual ceremonies aimed at protecting life here and hereafter. Suicide is condemned. The punishment is severe. The culprit is denied burial and funeral ceremonies; the corpse is deposited in the bad bush. This is meant to serve as a deterrent to others. The culprit is denied the right to join the ancestors. For the Igbo, life is precious. It has pride of place in the hierarchy of values. This is why they say *Ndubuisi* (Life is first). Someone who accidentally causes the death of another is banished from the community. But wilful homicide attracts death penalty. All these practices which are effects of reason were already in place before the unwelcome, disgusting and devastating presence of the Europeans in their midst.

Liberty is a product of reason as gleaned from Lockean understanding of law. Among the Igbo, there is freedom of expression. Their political and social organisation does not give room for dictatorship. They have gerontocracy as a form of government. In their general assembly, everyone has the freedom to express his mind. One can easily walk away from an assembly if he feels insulted during any deliberation. He has an inalienable and inviolable right to do so. Even women have right in Igbo society. In judicial matters, women have the final say. The “Umuada” (a group of women married outside their families) can be regarded as the Supreme Court. Cases that are tried by the menfolk without success at various stages are decided finally by the women. There is no longer any opportunity for an appeal after they have given their verdict.

Individuals have the right to property in Igbo society. This idea is derived from reason. For the Igbo, stealing is horrendous and is regarded as the gravest infraction. Stealing of yam is particularly abhorred. Some towns consider it an unpardonable offence. Stealing is an abomination. Those caught in the act of stealing are first isolated, excommunicated from social intercourse. They have

polluted themselves and need to be prevented from spreading their pollution to other members of the community. They are expected to perform the sacrifice of expiation to purge themselves of this pollution before they are deemed fit to be admitted once again into human interaction. Those who have mastered the act of stealing to such a high degree that they have never been caught, but whose involvement in stealing remained highly probable, are warned publicly at night by night masquerade, *Achikwu*, to desist and retrace their steps for their own good. Through these means and many more, the Igbo ensured the safety of their properties. All these are fruits of deep reflections.

Besides the above observations on life, liberty and property, the Igbo before the advent of the West, showed a high level of order, discipline and harmony in their relationship. War, for example, was not frequent among them. And whenever there was any, the hostility did not snowball to a magnitude in which human casualties were catastrophic on one or both sides; something uncommon in Europe. Attesting to this fact, Jordan says “Anything like an organised war was unknown in most parts of Iboland, and even wars between unfriendly towns seldom developed into more than passing skirmish... The organised slaughter which we in Europe now dignify by the term ‘war’ would have offended and even outraged the deepest feelings of these peoples.” (Jordan, 1971: p. 68) War in Iboland was guided by unwritten rules of engagement. The first was that war should be preceded by negotiations for peace; efforts should be made to restore peace. Chinua Achebe, in his novel *Arrow of God* (a fiction on Igbo people), was alluding to this when he was telling the story of the land dispute between Okperi and Umuaro communities. The people of Umuaro gathered to deliberate on their potential face-off with Okperi community. At the end of the deliberation, they decided to follow due process. This was to seek peace first before embarking on war. They appointed emissary to present their case to Okperi. The oldest man in the community who was present in that assembly reminded the emissary that he was not being sent on this mission to go and fight. They were sending him to go and “place the choice of war or peace before them... We do not want Okperi to choose war; nobody eats war. If they choose peace we shall rejoice.” (Achebe, 1986: p. 17). The second rule of engagement concerning war was that human fatalities were to be avoided. Third was that any side that suffered any human casualty ought to be compensated by the other. And because of this, each side of the belligerent divide tried to avoid causing the death of the opponent. This manifests a culture that is characterised by reason.

Besides this, the Igbo loved peace. Peace is an expression of reason, par excellence. Some towns dedicated a month in a year to celebrate peace. During this period, all provocations and discords, altercations were strictly forbidden. Defaulters were heavily sanctioned. Theophilus Okere narrated an incident that took place during the period of colonisation in Nigeria, precisely in 1915 (Okere, 2018: p. 2). The district officer brought a town in Ikwere Etche to court for obstructing justice. He accused the town of not reporting their misunderstandings

to them for adjudication. The representatives of the town at the court pleaded guilty. However, they added that the reason for their not reporting anything was that they were in the month of peace. Chinua Achebe was probably referring to something similar when he wrote about the “Week of Peace” in Umuofia, which was violated by Okonkwo; he beat his wife on this week of peace (Achebe, 1994: pp. 29-32).

That the Igbo loved peace was ably expounded by T. Okere. According to him, the Igbo preferred justice to violence and war as a means of achieving peace. Okere traced the Igbo etymologies of justice and peace and found that the meanings of the two words coincide (Okere, 2018: pp. 11-12). Peace is achieved when each person is given his due. And that which is due, is that which is determined through dialogue, persuasion, alignment and realignment of positions. All this is done within the framework of freedom and equality. When these vital steps are taken, the result is peace.

So, the Africans are not simply endowed with the power of reason, they have it in full; they have deployed it effectively in the organisation of their society. They did not misapply it, as some tend to think. Their current underdevelopment status is not due to insufficient reason or misapplication of reason. They were developing like any other part of the world, and even much faster, until their development was halted violently by the West through the use of their firepower machine guns. That historic defeat turned everything into topsy-turvy. Every value was turned upside down. The values which they cherished so much were replaced with alien values. However, there is no need to continue to cry over spilt milk by counting ceaselessly the litany of woes the Africans are going through as a result of the unnecessary aggression and invasion, and the subsequent damage to their way of life by the colonial masters. After a long period of huffing and puffing, it is time to settle down and address the challenges; it is time to take the bull by the horns. All hope should not be lost with regard to development.

5. Africa’s March to Greatness

Africans have enormous power of reason, a natural endowment, which appeared to have been regrettably snuffed away and silenced forever, but which seems to be alive again. This explains why there are agitations and cries of marginalisation in different countries. Reason has awakened their consciousness of their freedom, and the enormous power, they have to develop themselves and their environments. It has helped them to realise that their world is on the downward trend, worsening at an alarming rate as the years roll by. The awareness of this negative drift and the need to halt it has led to all sorts of proffering of solutions to the problem. Different writers have pointed out areas, which, in their opinions, are the anti-development factors responsible for their present underdevelopment. These include: bad leadership, corruption, bad constitution, lack of respect for the rule of law, ethnic and religious bigotry, tribalism, illiteracy, lack of

time consciousness, etc. These problems are real and are cogs in the wheels of progress. Some authors, however, argue as if when one problem is solved, the rest will be extirpated. This is not so, unfortunately. The problems can be said to be hydra-headed and organically connected. Solving one problem does not mean solving all. Good leadership, for instance, can attenuate problems. But it has no magic wand, however, to enervate the ethnic consciousness.

Nevertheless, there are two important questions that need to be considered. First, can there be a time when the above anti-development factors will all be substantially reduced to make room for the development of the continent? The answer is not in the affirmative. Things will remain sour and awry. They will remain so until the Africans are free, free to determine themselves and their future. They have been granted independence, but they are still politically and economically under the bondage and apron strings of the colonial masters. The latter use their position to support bad African leaders, encourage corruption (stolen money deposited in their banks), fan embers of ethnic chauvinism (by supporting one ethnic group against another), etc. The second question is, “suppose the anti-development forces listed above have been successfully eliminated, will African countries be coasting home to a political paradise?” The answer is still negative. The structural injustice on governance put in place by the Western countries, as well as their parasitic relationship with the Africans, will still stunt any development efforts.

The African countries will develop in leaps and bounds only when the West dismantles its oppressive, suppressive and exploitative stranglehold on Africa. To release their stranglehold on Africa and pave the way to Africa’s march to greatness, the IMF and World Bank and other lending financial institutions, should stop granting loans to African countries for projects that are not going to be executed by the African companies. Projects have to be contracted to indigenous companies. This is to ensure that the benefits accruing from the loans do not go back to foreigners. Again, the projects need to be monitored by the lending agents. This condition will encourage the indigenous companies to be more responsible, innovative and professional in their work. Proper execution of projects should serve as a condition for obtaining further loans. To do otherwise is to encourage African countries to accumulate debts, which are detrimental to development, because they will be using a good percentage of their income to service them. While debt profiling has a negative impact on Africa’s development, it is of immense benefits to lending institutions and their countries. The foreign creditors ought to stop the African leaders from stockpiling debts. What is the point of granting further loans when the previous loans were mismanaged and did not solve the targeted projects? *Economic Development in Africa Report 2020* says that the poverty rate in Africa stands at 40 percent. It paints the grim picture that the increase would remain in two digits up to 2030 (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2020: p. 34).

Furthermore, to assist the African countries in their march to greatness, in their attempt to take their destiny in their hands and develop the continent, the

foreign creditors should also make restructuring into true federalism as another condition for granting loans. Federalism is a political arrangement in which the federating units are allowed to generate their funds, manage them and pay the agreed tax to the federal government. This federal structure arrangement will destabilise the impact of ethnicity which has become the albatross to development. It is interesting to note that the ethnic nationalities were developing independently before they were brought together by the colonial masters. To assist them to continue to develop, they need to go back, but not completely to their precolonial days' status. Complete and immediate disintegration of ethnic nationalities in a country is not advisable. The experience in Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia is not worth repeating. The African ethnic nationalities can secede after they may have stabilised under the federal structure. They may find that even secession is no longer necessary, as was the case in United Kingdom. Scotland, in 2014, wanted to leave the United Kingdom, but the idea was defeated through a referendum and was subsequently discarded. Czech and Slovakia parted ways in 1993 without rancour. But this was after they had existed as federating units. Yugoslavia was made up of six republics before they went their separate ways and became independent countries. African countries should follow the same process if it is expedient.

Besides the above points on the West freeing its stranglehold on Africa, there is an additional need for foreign multinational companies to leave Africa or be indigenised or privatised. On the pretext of globalisation, these companies appear to have the rights to operate wherever they are on the continent. Globalisation as a concept is a trojan horse. It promotes inequality and impoverishment of Africans. The multilateral companies seem to be there for the benefits and support of the Africans, but in reality, they are strategically positioned to enrich their home countries. How can they still remain in Africa after many years of independence. They are in oil, manufacturing, agricultural, construction sectors, etc. They should leave the continent so that the Africans will fill up the vacuum created by their absence. Many jobs will be created and many people will be empowered financially.

6. Indigenous Model for African Development

Having received the requisite co-operation from the foreign countries, the African countries can then use their indigenous model to develop their continent. Here, we can use Igbo again as an example to show how it works. The Igbo have an indigenous mechanism for development. It is an economic model that they have used with utmost advantage. It is a model that is moored on the philosophy of *Onye aghana nwanne ya* (No one should abandon one's brother). This philosophy was later accentuated in the 1950s by a highlife singer and songwriter, Herbert Udemba in his song entitled, *Onye aghana nwanne ya*. He anchored this philosophy on the role that a brother plays at death. Death is a defining moment for the Igbo. This is because, at death, it is a befitting burial ceremony that pro-

cures one the access to join the ancestors in the spirit world (Arinze, 1978: p. 31). A brother contributes significantly to make this happen. This is why Herbert Udemba in this song reminds every Igbo: *chetakwa na ubochi onwu, o bu nwanne ka aga acho, ndi enyi nile ga ahapu gi gbalaga* (Remember that at death, it is a brother that is called, all the friends will abandon you and run away). The underlying assumption in this song is that it is necessary to help a brother now to become financially stable because of the financial role or contribution he plays at death. Oliver de Coque emphasises also this philosophy in his Album entitled, *Onye aghana nwanne ya*. Bright Chimezie, a singer and songwriter, expresses the same philosophy, in other words, in his lyrics: *Onulu Ube nwanne agbana oso* (He who hears the cry of a brother should not run away).

The philosophy of *Onye aghana nwanne ya* was applied successfully in the past to such an extent that beggars were scarce in the traditional Igbo society. *Onye aghana nwanne ya* philosophy is, in essence, a philosophy in which the more privileged or successful ones in terms of economic advantage assist their less privileged ones to come out of poverty. It is essentially the individuals and sometimes the kindred, the villages, the towns that are the drivers of this iconic economic system.

The Igbo want to journey through life together. They frown or condemn a situation where an extremely rich person is living in the midst of the poor. Such a person is not respected if he does not assist his family members in coming out of poverty (Oguejiofor, 1996: p. 20). As Onyewuenyi puts it “They (Igbo) do not consider individual achievements as success unless those riches and blessings spread over to other relatives.” (Onyewuenyi, 2002: p. 421). And so, they expect the rich to do everything in their power to assist the poor, not by feeding them daily, but by helping them to set up self-sustaining business ventures. They believe in collective success. That is why they have a saying: *Ofu osisi anaghi emebe ofia* (A tree does not make a forest). A forest is an assemblage of trees of various kinds; all existing and growing together. This Igbo saying adumbrates the Igbo community, as a community in which the individuals are thriving alongside others; the more successful ones assisting the less successful to thrive. This is why those who have distinguished themselves in their service to others, by adhering to the philosophy of *Onye aghana nwanne ya*, adopt the title names like: 1) *Onwa na etiri oha* (the moon that shines for all), 2) *Mmiri na ezoro oha* (the rain that falls for all), 3) *O mere oha* (One who shows favour to all), 4) *Oche ndo* (shelter for all), etc.

The Igbo philosophy of *onye aghana nwanne ya*, a paradigmatic economic model, which had been in place prior to colonial era, can be appreciated if it is looked upon, for example, from the historical experience of the Igbo after the Nigeria/Biafra civil war. We do so because it is a philosophy that assisted them in no small measures to rebuild their lives at the end of the civil war. The Igbo lost heavily during the war in terms of human and economic resources. But they have rebuilt themselves and their environment with imponderable speed and are currently the most enterprising and most successful ethnic nationality in Nige-

ria. People are awe-struck by this. More successful individuals have built awe inspiring asphalted roads, cottage hospitals, schools, water boreholes and other development projects for their communities. Those of them in diaspora make remittances that go to improve not just their communities but Nigeria in general. It is their philosophy of life that helped them achieve this feat. How did the philosophy of *Onye aghana nwanne* help to achieve this which is now being proposed as a model for development?

The Igbo are generally believed to be hardworking and resilient; they do not give up easily in the pursuit of their objectives. Risk of failure does not deter or scare them away from their set objectives. *Nwatakiri tachio obi, ometu eke aka* (If a child is courageous, he touches the sacred python). The Igbo are mobile and adventurous; they move to different cities, local and international, in search of greener pastures. If they find viable economic opportunities anywhere, they settle there. And very quickly, they acclimatise themselves to the new environment. When an Igbo succeeds financially in a business venture in any place, he goes home to flaunt his new found wealth. While coming back to his place of abode, he takes one of his relatives with him to join in his business. He allows him to stay with him for five years as an apprentice. When the period of apprenticeship is over, he gives his brother financial aid to start his own trade. Sometimes, he may provide him with a business premise, and supply goods to him on credit. Ordinarily, this brother ought to pass harrowing experience while waiting to get customers to patronise his goods. This is because when the buyers are not forthcoming as quickly as expected, he will be sustaining himself and paying his necessary house bills from the initial money given to him by his brother. Not too long, he becomes insolvent and his business venture may collapse. But these initial hiccups are overcome by the Igbo. This is because, at the start of his own business, the Igbo apprentice usually attracts some of the customers or clients of his master to his new business venture. His regular maintenance and his bills are paid from the profits he makes from these customers of his master. His master's customers, which he has now appropriated, assist him also in getting more customers by advertising him and promoting his products. As time goes on, he acquires additional customers by sheer dint of his own efforts. When he is financially well established, he goes back, in turn, to his home town to fetch someone else. Before long, the city in which they do their businesses is filled up with successful Igbo business people. They hold their village, town or their ethnic group meetings to protect their business interests. So, the key factors behind their success are 1) Apprenticeship 2) Financial aid is given to someone at the end of apprenticeship 3) The fact of starting one's business with the patronage of the customers of one's master. Numbers 1 and 3 are the hallmarks of this model.

This Igbo economic model yields better results than the existing government economic policy, where the government simply organises workshops and gives financial aid to the participants at the workshop to start their own businesses. The recipients of the grants often fail to make appreciable profits. The business

is often bankrupts, since the recipients do not have immediate customers from whom to make their own profits. Besides, they maintain themselves from government grants, since they have not made any income. African countries, *faute de mieux*, need to adopt the Igbo economic model. However, this needs to be upgraded and downloaded to reflect the labyrinth of contemporary realities. To do this, the African governments ought to give financial supports to well established businessmen in small and medium scale enterprises with conditions: 1) that they ought to accept people to work under them as apprentices, 2) that they ought to assist them financially at the end of their apprenticeship. This arrangement will help not only to reduce the number of the army of unemployed people and the hue and cry against the government's ineptitude, but it will also create wealth for a large number of people and reduce to the barest minimum the societal maladies associated with unemployment.

The Igbo model of wealth creation is also relevant in farming. Usually, children learn farming technique from their parents. When they are of age, they are given portions of land and farm seedlings to start their own farming. Money is not given. When parents do not have seedlings to give, children usually have recourse to their neighbours for assistance. Normally, there is a percentage of the seedlings that is given back to the lender. The government can also update this traditional practice to reflect contemporary needs. Some well-established farmers can be assisted financially by the government to boost and increase their productivity. But such grants should be on the condition that they employ people to work with them and understudy them as well. At the end of the designated period of apprenticeship, the government should give the new farmers, not money, but seedlings and modern farming equipment to start their own farming. They can go to the banks to borrow money on their own with the usual bank credit conditions.

This model should be extended to all economic departments in the private sector. As the private sector is the engine of development, the adoption of this model will go a long way in bringing about economic turnaround and relief for African countries. It will do so seamlessly.

7. Conclusion

The underdevelopment status of the African countries is no fault of theirs. It is not because Africans are less human than people from other races. They are in full possession of reason, which is the first among the other attributes of human nature. Their social-political life, which was founded on reason, was very integrative; it was flourishing and blossoming before it was shattered and battered by the colonisers.

The battered life of the Africans needs to be rebuilt. The West has an important role in this work of reconstruction. Without her co-operation, Africa will continue to remain underdeveloped. Africans have an indigenous model of development. But this can be put to good use only if the West removes its eco-

nomic and political grip on Africa.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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