

The Philosophical Background of African Humanism: The Genuine Way to Development

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Abstract: It has been debatable whether the western value system especially capitalism has really helped Africa or not. To the genuine African patriots, the western culture of individualism and materialism is hostile to African people and their development. Based on the effects of colonialism and the present trend of dependency of African leadership on the western capitalist system, there is recession of African humanistic system which apparently results to African backwardness. In views of this, the western models of individualism and capitalism are incompatible with African culture. As against this, the philosophy of African humanism is the justificational basis for genuine African development. Not only is this work committed to portraying and defending the beauty of African humanism, but it is a manifestation of how African humanism (mirrored from the Igbo setting) is more superior to the western ideology of individualism and materialism which as practised, has been the bane of socio-cultural upheaval of some African countries. The philosophy of African humanism is therefore the solution of the upheaval.

Key words: African humanism • Debatable and western culture

INTRODUCTION

The issue of humanism is paramount in African society. This is manifest in the cultural values of the people. In the discussion of the important roles of African humanistic values, reference will be made to Igbo culture. Every society has a set of values covering every aspect of human society. But the advent and introduction of western value- system it appears that the humanistic background of African values has been liquidated and hence no better future for African progress and promotion of the dignity of man [1, 2, 3].

As the value-system of African culture aims at the promotion of man and the society in general, why the recession of its humanistic function? Colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism being the cause of this recession, should our enlightenment and consciousness of the importance of our cultural values not be reactivated and reinvigorated to nullify the western influence? Could the revisit and modern systematicity of the humanistic cultural values of Africa not serve as a background for the remodeling of African society in the contemporary time?

African humanism is noticed in every sphere of African life and the humanistic values apparently play

regulating roles in human relationship and also stabilizing factor of the society. In the traditional Igbo society (of Nigeria) these values cannot be separated from religious beliefs and as well play religious functions. According to Dzobo “as pervasive as religion and the divine are in African belief-system, the African values are practical and pragmatic, they are products of individual and community experiences and hence, they are man-centered and community centered”. They are not based on divine revelation (as the Islamic and Christian religious values are); nor on a supposed rationality of man (according to the western mind) [4, 5, 6, 7]. Rather, as he puts it “they come from the flux of African life both past and present, with emphasis on past experience [8, 9, 10].

This quotation presupposes that African development cannot be genuine and real unless it is anchored on African experience. By this it is true that western culture (and its imperialists prescriptions) are of foreign culture and therefore cannot reflected on the African experience. It is on this ground that African humanism is justified against western individualism and materialism (in the name of capitalist impositions and practice) [11, 12, 13, 14].

The relevance of this work therefore, is to show how a new African society will be established on a revisited waning and ignoring African values which (in its fine-tuned manner) will take care of the devastating problems created by western culture. Under this writing, exposition will be made of African humanism and the respective humanistic values of the African culture. Equally, there will be strong evidence of how the consonance and synthesis of African humanistic values with modern rational promotion of collective values will eradicate the western capitalist inhumanity in African.

The Analytic Conception of African Humanism:

The concept “humanism” is a complex one when seen from different intellectual perspectives. It is not the place of this writing to look at the various historical and philosophical conceptions of humanism. But for the understanding of its most relevant meaning, humanism is the devotion to human interest. It is the work and dignity of man. According to J.N. Dodds “humanism is a way of looking at the world which emphasizes the importance of human beings - their nature and their place in the universe” (384). While in Harver World Encyclopedia “Humanism is attitude of mind which stresses the dignity and importance of man”. [15]. What these definitions emphasize is that humanism teaches that every person has dignity and worth and therefore, should commend the respect of other persons. Man being a social being, humanism is the marriage of morality and religion, as the function (and focus) of religion is to improve and enhance human relation with God and with fellow man. In this perspective humanism is not secular, but the conception accepts that science and technology must be reduced to the recognition of man’s worth socialized and man educated, to respond positively to rapid change. To some extent, this has affinity with African humanism which does not rule out religion. Religion is seen to serve the human welfare. The question then is “what is African humanism?”

As humanism centers on human life, values and dignity, it is said that humanism is a world-idea, it is a global concept. But the fact that we often hear about humanism as it applies to a particular set of people or theory - say European, American, Marxists, Existentialists, etc. there must be some peculiarities in each. Africa is not an exception. If humanism is a global concept and Africa is within this sphere, then there is African humanism”. In this understanding, we consider humanism as the philosophy of a people. It is on this pedestal that Mbiti’s conception of African philosophy comes in handy:

It is the understanding, attitude of mind, logic and perception behind the manner in which African people think, act or speak in the different situations of life (2).

African traditional society and still to a good extent present societies, have the human person as prior, central and endpoint in techno-developmental valuations and engagements. (c) P.8 developmental valuations and engagements. African humanism is manifest in Igbo dicta like Onye nwere madu ka onye nwere ego (He, who has a human being is greater than he who has money), Madukaku (Man is greater than wealth), Nwakaego (Child is greater than money), Ndukaku (Life is greater than wealth). “These and numerous others” argues Iroegbu, “tells the story of the priority of human over the material and the economic”. (83)

African humanism is related to other conceptions of humanism on the centrality of man in all human endeavours. Unlike the scientific humanism, African humanism holds that moral (human) values are derived from both human experience and the divine law of right and wrong. The worth of these values is measured by this contribution to the enhancement of human life. African humanism bases man’s life on the authoritarian commandments of religions or an alleged cosmic purpose that must be fulfilled. Along this line Mbiti writes: “Africans have their own ontology., but it is an extremely anthropocentric ontology in the sense that everything is seen in terms of its relation to man”. (15)

Going by this vision of the world, even the gods are at the service of the human person. Through intermediaries of Supreme Being, the minor deities (ancestors included) must care for man. When they do their human service well, they are revered. When they perform badly, they are deprecated. It is in this line that Omoregbe writes.

The spirits of ancestors are believed to be living blissful lives in the spiritual world, able to help the living in times of difficulties and deserve to be honoured by the living. (24)

African humanism vis a vis social, political and religious aspects is a sine qua non in our Context. Socially, Africans interact, relate to one another and attend to each other’s needs. In the political arena, it is obvious that Africans are not left out. The African man said ‘No’ to racial oppression during the colonial era. Very often, we see in Africa, people designated with the ‘title’:

“Freedom Fighters”. These are people who believed that the worth of man be restored where it is denied. The efforts and attempts to crushing colonial imperialism to the grassroot also portrays the African humanism politically. Africans have made great contributions in the political history of the world. Among these are; “Politics without bitterness” proposed by late Alhaji Ibrahim Waziri of Nigeria, “Ujamaa” of Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and “Conscientism” of Nkrumah of Ghana [16, 17].

Religiously, Africans have the idea of human affection, sacredness of life, sympathy, communalism among others. Moral ideals are attached to religion. African religion inspires dedication to the highest ethical ideal which are centered on human relationship. For instance, any attempt to terminate life “illegally” is seen as a taboo (AR?). The word “illegally” here implies that there are exceptional cases like self- defence in war.

As our focus is on Nigerian people’s welfare, references and analogies will be drawn from the Igbos as an exemplar of African humanism. This does not mean that we shall be limited only to the Igbos, but, to use them as a central instrument to pass on our concept of African humanism. The Igbos form one of the three largest ethnic groups in Nigeria. Like their neighbours, they belong to the Negro race of Africa and speak a language found in West and Central Africa. (Nwala 15). The Igbo people live in the area between Benin and Igala, the Cross -River and Niger Delta City-States. According to Ekwunife:

The Igbos inhabit area of Southern Nigeria between latitude 5 to 7 degrees North and longitude 6 to 8 degree East. The area covers about 15, 800 square miles, the bulk of which falls within the equatorial rain square mile. (2)

Regardless of cultural differences between the groups, there are certain characteristics typical of Igbo society. The Igbos respect age and leadership comes from the elders. Respect is not servility and is balanced by the belief that birth does not confer advantage on any man.

The Igbo society is egalitarian, every man considering himself as good as everyone else and demanding a voice in his local affairs. It is not the place of this essay to catalogue the general characteristic of the Igbo people, rather, it is an essay whose aim is to analyze African humanism as portrayed by Igbo culture.

The Basic Bases of African Humanism: It has been held that the most prized, the most persuasive and the most enduring principle of African traditional value-system is

the African Humanism. According to Wiredu “it has often been said that our traditional outlook was intensity humanistic. It seems to me that as far as the basis of the traditional ethics is concerned, this claim is abundantly justified”. In confirmation of this, if any one reflects on our traditional ways of speaking about morality, he is bound to be struck by the preoccupation with human welfare. What is morally good is what befits a human being, it is what is decent for man - what brings dignity, respect contentment, prosperity, joy, to man and his community. And what is morally bad is what brings misery, misfortune and disgrace. African value system is that which promotes the dignity and welfare of man in his existential condition [18, 19].

It has been argued that most African values have been superseded by Western values, through it instrumentality of education and imperialist agent leadership and as such Africa cannot boast of any values. We agree that some values in African cultural setting are receding in the face of modernism which colonialism and imperialism brought about. However, it is an indisputable fact that there are enduring social values which in spite of the invasion and the encroachment of Western values-system have survived social upheaval engendered by alien cultural invasion [20, 21, 22].

In confirmation of this Pantaleon Iroegbu writes:

Contemporary African societies are in the betwixt and between of sitting on the depositum of tradition, values and life set up and in the invasion of Western value of materiality over humanity value Lie system.... Yet the African values are still consciously present. Most of them are still real in today Africa. They stand as witnesses to African development. Though the material may be low, the human is not. (82 -83)

The implication of this quotation is that notwithstanding as there is a struggle between the imported Western values and those of autochthonous Africa values, the most of the human remain unshakable. This is because African values are humanistic. These values take human person prior, central and end techno-development valuation and engagements.

In this essay the different strands of African humanism will be treated under the umbrella of (1) The sacredness of life (2) Human relation (3) Respect for authority and elders (4) The extended family and (5) Communalism

The Sacredness of Life: For an African, life is sacred and is of inalienable worth. By this, it means that life is precious and must be protected. To preserve life is a “sine qua non” in African Humanism. While almost all societies have a respect for life. Africans have a deep reverential deference for human life. Its beginning is elaborately celebrated in pregnancy, birth, naming and initiation ceremonies. Its growth and continuity is feasted in adulthood and adolescence rites, family rites and communal festivities. Its ends buoyantly in death rites, departure rituals and funeral festivities.

When one talks of life, it is humanism ‘per se’ it is both religiously and socially an abominable offence, an indelible crime indeed to shed blood or extinguish life. Stressing the sacredness of life Oliver Onwubiko writes.

The African does not like violence ‘per se’. This is because shedding of blood is abhorred. People who were killed are those whose continued existence was a threat to the life of others and to the peace of the community (22)

Given the quotation, the principle that it is better for one man to die than for all the community to perish applied. The shedding of blood, especially innocent blood is the greatest evil on earth; against the earth and against humanity. It is Nso- Ala (Taboo) that has the weightiest sanction in the world. Others who threaten or harass lives are proportionately sanctioned according to their evils. Witches and wizards who constitute recurring men to other people’s lives were hated public enemies.

In our time and age the incidence of abortion is rising to a disturbing proportion statistics reveal that worldwide, 30- 40 million unborn children are cruelly and callously slaughtered annually. Ugorji observes that:

People take abortion as a way out of various forms of complications and dilemmas.... An unborn child may be unwanted by its parents and so seen as resulting by accident. (9)

It is an indubitable fact that abortion is strange to the ‘original’ African life. But if it exists now in Africa, we must realize that the whole idea has been imported into our culture by those who never loved African humanism to stay. We must have to say this because in Africa:

Murder was not encouraged, especially within the clan man conscientiously killed another man within the community, he was killed himself. But if he killed a kinsman inadvertently, he was exiled for some long period....It is absurd, Africans believe, for one to extinguish life and no one preserving his own as if nothing happened.

Preservation of life in African humanism is quite justified with its religious support. Life is sacred and to that effect anything to protect it is encouraged and assured as well. Most often we hear the Igbo say: Anaghi eji ihe ana- agba na nti agba n’ anya (we do not apply earpick to the eye). This implies that anything about life must be appropriately taken care of.

For an Igbo man, the origination, preservation and promotion of life is the gauge of good and bad. Who is able to make or give life and nurture it is deeply respected and honoured. The first is God. Ndu-sinachi (life comes from God). Chikwendu (God is the owner of life) Chikerendu (God is the author, creator of life). Not only human life, but also all other lives [23, 24, 25]. Whoever contributes- to them is honored: under this category are the gods who protect the lives given to men by God; human parents who are God instruments in the arrival of human life on earth; the community who welcomes, nourishes and educate life, the family who loves and feeds the lives, the neighbour and distant relations who assist the life to grow; specialists like the Dibias (Native doctors), teachers, mentors and others who contribute from their different areas to the progress of life and its appropriate arrival at its “terminus ad quem”. In this perspective, the African deep love for and profound respect for life make all development, a development for life. And all progress, a progress towards full life.

It is generally obvious that Africans prize life above everything. The Igbo’s saying: “Nduka” –life is supreme, is expressive of the African regard for life....Any form of materialism which ultimately leads to the destruction of life is alien and destructive of the African culture and concept of human life

African humanism is also manifest in the nourishment of the human body and special attention to it. This is properly depicted by Parrinder as follows:

In some places such as among the Ibos of Nigeria there are fattening – houses for girls. Here, maidens are scheduled for months, fed on fatty food and the bodies anointed with oil.... (95)

In Africa, especially among the Igbos, the sacredness associated with life goes to explain the rigidity with which the Africans treat and regard sexual intercourse and the sex organ. In fact sex taboos and the demand for virginity before marriage stems from the fact that the Africans believe that:

The blood of virginity is the symbol that life has been preserved, that the spring of life has not already been flowing wastefully and that both the girl and her relatives have preserved the sanctity of human reproduction.

Regarding the questions, what is the goal of life? Why does man exist? It has been argued by African traditional philosophers like Weridu, Omeregbe among others that the post-mortern life in the spiritual world though blissful, is somewhat gloomy and unattractive and therefore not the fulfillment of human life. For the Africans, the fulfillment of human existence takes place here in this world. It does not consist on the accumulation of wealth as held in the Western world, where materialism reigns supreme. According to Omeregbe, “a person is not considered as having attained the fulfillment of life simply by being rich. It is the man who has numerous children that is believed to have lived on successful and fulfilled life”. (25) In essence, we are saying that no matter how rich a man is, if he has no child his life is considered a frustrated life. In Igbo setting, a childless life is a frustrated life; to be childless is to have missed goal of human existence. Lying behind the desire is a longing for perpetuity and interminability of life here on earth. According to Omeregbe’. “But it is a yearning for the impossible, for death is certain. But yearning is a strong natural yearning, deeply rooted in man’s nature” (25)

However, it is the belief among the Africans that the most satisfactory solution is self perpetually here on earth through one’s children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and so on. Given this pictures, one continues to live in and through one’s children, hence procreation is imperative.

The importance of the sacredness and perpetuity of life lies with how unlawful termination of life is viewed. The earth forbids bloodshed and so is sanction solidarity

for the community. To this effect, suicide is an “Aru” (an abomination). Any victim to this in Igbo tradition and culture never receives a befitting burial at all. If a statistics could be taken on suicidal cases, it is obvious that “those in the Western world” who deny African humanism would secure almost all the percentages. In view of this life is inalienable and sacredly protected.

Human Relation: Under this caption we shall consider how Africans relate to each other as well as strangers. As a humanistic social relation, the guiding principle of human relation in Igbo community is “live-and-let-live”. This presupposes interpersonal and inter-community relationship realized in the interaction between individuals of the same community and different communities. The relationship between individuals recognizes their work as human beings and not only what they possess or what they can do for each, even though these can come as letter or secondary consideration in terms of reciprocity and in terms of interpersonal relationship. Help for one another is not based on immediate or an exact equivalent remuneration. Everyone is mindful that each person has something to contribute to his welfare no matter the degree [26, 27].

The arrangement in human relation is that of being one’s brother keeper or caring for each other’s welfare. Everyone is obliged to assist those need help. The needy and the helpless are taken care of and assisted. It is in this perspective that Chieka Ifemesia writes:

A way of life emphatically centered upon human interest and values, on mode of living evidently characterized by empathy and by consideration and compassion for human beings (Ifemesia 2)

In every aspect in the African life, Africans have each other in mind and show concern for each other. They manifest this at different ceremonies like birth, marriage and death. At these ceremonies (as observed in Emii - my community), those affected are provided with assistance like the provision of water, firewood, etc and even assisted with farmworks. All these show that Africans are hospitable in their relationship with one another. The Igbo would say: Onye huru ebe okuko na avo nshi, ya chufu ya nihi na onweghi onye ma onye ga ata ukwu ya, (He who sees a fowl scratching some excrement with its feet, let him chase it away, for no one knows who shall eat the legs). This teaches that everybody have the responsibility to correct each other for a brighter future.

The Igbos hold that: Onyema aka gi nwanne (a stranger is never valued more than a brother). We must realize that sabotage, scheming and “backfire” is an imported doctrine in the African way of life. If we can realize this, it would certainly help each one to be his brother’s keeper. At his juncture we would like present this question in the words of Chinua Achebe:

“And besides, do not our people say that he is a fool who treats his brother worse than a stranger?” (94)

We should note that this encourages brotherhood rather than tribalism. Tribalism and nepotism like most other human relationships are not products of the African humanism. Onwubiko emphasizes that:

It must be remarked that “nepotism” and “tribalism” in their present and dangerous forms are not offshoots of the African traditional culture. They arose in the urban setting and through the European culture contact. (21)

The act of dialogue and conversation is a cherished value in African relations. Opinions are often freely shared and problems are subjects to discussion because one okara oha ogbom anaghi agho ya (he who tells people what he does never suffer mishap). Expressing the importance of free and bona fide discussion in human relation Onwubiko says “the unwillingness to talk to people about either private or public affairs can be interpreted as bad manners or sign of enmity, (20). It is a common belief among the Africans that he who discusses his affair with others hardly runs into difficulties or makes mistakes in the execution of his plans.

For an Igboman, love vis-à-vis human evaluations must not be Ochi n’Onu iwe n’ obi (smile in the face but hatred in the heart). In most cases an Igboman could be heard saying: Okwo m n’azu ukwu a na-eru ala, ya hashiia m m’aji ukwu m garama (he who carries me on his back with my legs still marching on the ground, let him allow me to walk on my legs).

In an Igbo locality where this research was carried out it is conceived that: iri kpole je agwo ?ria (how do you cure sickness). To this effect, it is customary and prevalent in Igbo traditional community though optional and voluntary, to visit the sick daily. It is in this perspective that for writes: “In traditional African culture, the weak and the aged, the incurable, the helpless, the sick were affectionately taken care of in the comforting family atmosphere” (quoted by Onwubiko 20).

Another area of African humanism in human relation is that of hospitality. Sense of hospitality is inherently indispensable in the (currently survival) African values. There are always spontaneous welcome and accommodation to strangers and visitors. Very often strangers are incorporated and even provided with accommodation and land.

Unlike the West (Europeans), no appointment and special invitation are needed for one to visit a distant relation or neighbour. On arrival, once there is food the visitor is invited to eat. He is treated kindly, just as one would wish to be treated when visiting another home.

Africans have symbolic ways of expressing welcome. These are in forms of presentation of kola nuts, traditional gin, coconuts, etc, in various communities. These are given to show that he is welcome and safe. It is of note that the basis of hospitality is that “a guest must not harm his host and that when he departs he should not develop a hunch back on the way back”. This sense of humanism is highly noted that the basis of hospitality is that “a guest must not harm his host and that when he deposits, he should not develop a hunch back on the way back. This sense of humanism is highly cherished when sharing with a needy neighbour who comes for assistance. Anybody who has and does not assist is taken to be a bad follower. All these have survived the western individualism and love for selfish acquisition.

Respect for Authority and Elders: Another aspect of African humanism is in the area of respect for authority and elders. Sense of respect for authority and elders helps to solder and smoothen social relations in African society. Before the advent of slave trade and colonialism, there were stability, peace and harmony. There was the deep respect for constituted authority be it that of head of the family or of the Obi, Oba or emir. This authority is hierarchical but democratic, in the sense that it remains legitimate and scared only for as long as it continued to be exercised in the interest of the governed and in accordance with the time-honoured and sanctified customs and traditions of the people. It should be pointed out that the obedience is not to the person of the Obi, Oba or Emir as an individual but rather to the institution. In case of abuses of it, obedience becomes legitimate and the culprit is made to bow out. In Yoruba land, suicide was an honourable way of doing so. In Igboland, so much is regard for peace, stability and orderliness as political values that the individual life could be sacrificed to maintain the integrity and inviolability of the institution.

It is natural for African to respect elders. The way the young ones salute the elders was and is still regarded as evidence of morality or lack of it, instead of as a matter of etiquette. The importance of respect for elders is seen in the Igbo saying “He who listens to an elder is like one who consult an oracle”. The oracles are believed to give the infallible truths, thus the elders are also believe to say the truth and the words and instructions are headed for the promotion of good behaviour among the young. The elders are taken to be repository of communal wisdom and therefore they are conceded leadership in the affairs of the people. The respect given to the elders has its practical effect in the maintenance of custom and tradition. The young are always looking forward for being elders and they are after told that if a child respects an elder, he would be respected by the young when he becomes an elder.

The deep respect accorded to human relation is not the case in the West. Many events have shown that European attitude in a way is oppose to the African human relation. Aminata Sowfall narrating the plight of one of the characters in the *Beggar’s Strike* says that:

He could not stand the bullying and the occasional insult he received from this European who because he was aware of living in a conquered country, treated the inhabitants worse than dogs, (Aminata 5)

Again Celestine Obi citing from a *Journal: The kings and Chiefs of Brass to 4 February, 1895 (F.O. 40 3/215)* sic. opines that:

The ill treatment of the Niger Company is very bad....Our boys fired, killed and plundered and even the innocent provisions sellers were captured and killed likewise....They fired, killed and plundered the fishermen and even the innocent woman caught, stripped naked, violated and painted with coal tar. (9)

How can people with such dehumanizing mentality claim superiority on the issue of humanism? In spite of all these inhuman acts, Africans never foul their concept of human relations. Sowfall Aminata writes.

You know in the olden days these white people came to rob and exploit us. Now they visit our country for a rest and in search of happiness. That is why we have built hotels and holiday villages and casinos to welcome them. (17)

This quotation shows that Africans welcome foreigners (strangers) and treat them with all that they could wish to make them comfortable

The Extended Family: According to Pantaleon Iroegbu “African languages generally have no words for uncles, aunts, cousins and nieces. All these are part of the one family. The family is one, but extended” (84). Marriage is taken as a good and serious thing in the sense that it is a covenant between two (extended) families, kindred and villages. The extended family system is very much alive in contemporary African in spite of the wave the Western value-system is making. It is a conflict and crisis - resolution ocean.

“Living together” and sense of “community of brothers and sisters” are the basis of and the expression of the extended family system in Africa. The rationale behind it, is that balance of kinship relations, seen as essential to the balance with nature that was itself the material guarantee of survival, called for specific conduct.

It should be pointed at that the most admired value in the traditional African economic arrangement is social security or economic insurance guaranteed by the social organization typified by extended family system. The security is not just for the old age, but also for the poor and disadvantaged members of the family, who have been seen to have made efforts but have not been successful. Children of such unsuccessful adults are a legitimate economic charge on the wealth of the luckier members. In other words, the comforting family atmosphere is provided by the family system. It is a system that ultimately anchored and still rests on the philosophy of “Live-and -let- live” It is a principle which defines rights and duties, responsibilities and obligations towards the less fortunate, those incapacitated in one way or another. For instance, a man has the obligation to cater for the widow and orphans of his dead relative. Failure to do so earns him strong public opprobrium and a result, it is difficult to find some in the community without help. In essence, extended family is a veritable instrument in the family cohesion and community continuity and stability.

Communalism: Life in the African community is both human and humane. One can never be a victim to both social and cultural alienation. It has been pointed out by Onwubuiko that the African idea of security and its value depend on personal identification with its value depend on personal identification with and within the community. The authentic African is known and identified in, by and through his community. In the economic sphere, the guiding principle for the economic arrangement is that of being one’s brother’s keeper or caring for each other’s

welfare, at least within one's immediate community. The basic principle of African social set-up is communalism.

Generally, communalism is the social life of the African which is founded on the African belief that all human beings are members of one family of mankind. [27, 28]. One sign of communalism in Africa was that the families lived and worked together as one entity. There was no private or secretarian ownership of property. For the Igbo: Otu aka anaghi eke ngwugwu (a parcel is never tied with only one hand). Onye amaghi ibe ezi ya (When one does not know, neighbours teach him). The union among the Igbos brings about solidarity and fraternal correlation. Emphasizing the effect of communalism, the Igbo would say: ?k? k?ba anu ?hia Ojee kwobe ahu n'osisi, ma ?k? k?ba mmadu ? si ibe ya kooya (When an animal feels some itches, it goes to relieve itself on a tree but when a man feels it, he seeks the help of his fellow man)

To live, one must survive and progress and for one to survive and make some progress one has to live. In this sense;

Communalism, as a characteristic way of life has moulded the African right from his origin, it has made it possible for him to live and not just to live, but to succeed to progress and to outlast because it derives from the nature itself of the African [29].

In most parts of Igboland (particularly in Owerri) there is a practice called *ilumara mmadu ihe*. This means giving out some livestock such as fowl, goat, dog or sheep to a person to keep and carter for. Any profit that may accrue from the capital livestock is divided by the two parties. This contributes increase in wealth. The Africans believe in the concept of *Igwebuiké* (Strength in togetherness). On this Julius Nyerere has proposed the philosophy of "Ujamaa" which literally means; "togetherness" and "familyhood". The Igbo would say: *Agwo si umu ya na ndi mmadu na enwe ike n' ebe anyi no nani mgbe anyi no n' iche n' iche* (which the English would have as "United we stand, divided we fall") Given the Igbo perspective of humanism, the statement of the fathers of the Second Vatican council apparently underspins our humanism. Thus;

Individuals, families and the various groups which make up the civil community, are aware of their inability to achieve a truly human life by their own unaided efforts, they see the need for a wider community where each one will make a specific contribution to an even broader implementation of the common good [30, 31].

Reacting against capitalism, individualism, exploitation and their concomitant class conflict, Nyerere of Tanzania pointed out that African Communalism was a fundamental principle of the economic arrangements. A man is just as rich or poor as his community. Thus everyman is obliged to work and contribute when he is able to and to be provided for, as a matter of right, when he is no longer productive. It is observed, that parasitism is not tolerated, whoever is capable of working but refuses to, or is lazy, will be allowed to starve there and then.

The philosophy behind the African communalism, therefore guarantees individual responsibility within the communal ownership and relation. The prosperity of a single person says an African adage does not make a town rich. In other words, a person can only be truly safe in a community.

In African (Igbo) traditional setting, land is a veritable factor in all economic consideration, the avenue to wealth and poverty. Hence, in its distribution, the communalistic principle was brought into play so that all able-bodied men could contribute their quotas without excuse and so that no group would be a landless peasantry looking up to some usually absentee landlords for their daily bread as a permanent wage-earning class. This presupposes a communal system of land tenure, with the community or family-head holding the land in trust for all members, born and as - yet - unborn. According to Akinpelu, "the allocation was strictly according to need and the ability of the individual to develop". (38)

In essence, we are saying that African humanism is best understood in the light of communalism. Communal community offers the African the psychological and ultimate security as it gives its members both physical and ideological identity. It must be noted that in the African mentality, the community as an entity remains, while individuals, as persons come and go. Therefore, the African emphasizes community life and communalism as a living principle of which the basic ideology is community-identity. Its aim is to produce and present an individual as a community culture bearer.

CONCLUSION

So far, we have been able to catalogue the humanistic values in African culture. This we portrayed by using the Igbo value-system as a case study. Man in African traditional culture is not just an individual who "contracts" to live with others in society and presumably opts out if the balance of advantages is no longer favourable. Rather the African man is first and foremost a member of his family, the community and his society in

that order before being an individual. Lambo's statement presupposes the social and communal nature of African man as against the individualism of the Western Europe. There is a metaphysical belief in the superiority of the claims of the family and the community over the individuals re-echoes throughout the various values that we have considered here. African values as noted in this essay are man-centered and community-centered. This being the case, it is not a surprise that human dignity and the respect for human life are of supreme importance. The cultural values are tailored to ensure a man's tenure of life, right from birth until old age. These strands of African humanism (values) are ingrained in African personality that they are taken as mirrors for our authenticity as Africans. The enduring nature of these values, in spite of cultural upheaval engendered by colonialism is as a result of the inherent humanism associated with them. Anyone who casts a reflection on the ways of speaking about these values is bound to be struck by the preoccupation with human welfare. For an African, what morally good is what befits a human being, it is what is decent for a man, what brings dignity, respect, contentment, prosperity and joy, to man and his community. These cultural values enhance and safeguard African humanistic outlook.

We must point out that it is anthropologically fallacious to say that the Western European values have destroyed the whole of African culture. This is practically not possible. The European value-system is in Europe and stays there. African humanistic values are in Africa and are consciously present here. What come into contact are elements and products of the cultures which in spite of their influence have left some African humanistic values undiminished. It is on these identified cultural values and experiences that African socialism is expected to thrive.

Taking all in all, the different strands of African humanism (values) though may not be specific and exclusive to Africa, they are nevertheless African for they are not only found here and they are above all present to an eminent degree. It is then consequently imperative that they should be jealously guarded and any development Africa must pursue, must be rooted on in the genuine grounds of those strands of cultural humanism (values). They give us a character that is authentic, distinctive and uniquely African. These humanistic values are people-oriented and tally with our own conditional terrain. So any genuine leadership that is committed to the development that is geared to people's wellbeing and comfort must adopt and adapt African socialism that overrides the present's capitalist trend. This will get rid of the ills of individualism and selfishness which are inherent in the imperialist capitalism operating in some African countries (especially the Nigerian present trend), where the cabal in

the name of leadership is promoting privatization and commercialization of national wealth and dependency on the West for their security. For leadership to achieve national development in this contemporary time, it must promote the ability of the people of the given society (nation) to exercise concerted effort in dealing with their environment. As advocated in this writing, there must be a concerted effort by various governments in Africa to protect, preserve and promote the importance of African socialist culture in order to enhance human dignity. African elites and scholars should as well assist in preserving, developing and promoting the African socialist humanism in order to achieve genuine development, peace, social harmony and unity of their respective nations.

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