

## **AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY AND ITS IDENTITY CRISIS: A PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION**

**BY**

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

The search for identity has always been a key issue facing mankind in their strive for significance and meaning. However, the African understanding of their philosophy and herself is said to be in crisis having been observed from a number of directions. Wangari Maathia opines in one of her book "The Challenge for Africa" that if African is to build for the future it must first face its past<sup>1</sup>. The book shows African's colonial history as a disastrous period for the continent and how many of the problems faced by its people today stem from her past. It tells of Africa's loss of identity under its colonial masters and the disintegration of societal hierarchies that had developed over centuries. The resulting crisis of leadership, corruption and a reluctance to relinquish power has stunted development. Puppet governments, the exploitation of the continent's abundant natural resources and the use of African nations as a buffer against eastern communism or western capitalism have, according to Maathai, left the African both physically and psychologically scarred.<sup>2</sup>

I

### **THE CONCEPT OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY:**

The African renaissance, search for an African philosophical explanation of the experience gained under the truth and reconciliation commission. It has also accelerated intellectual interest in his emerging philosophy. The work of Placide Tempels' Bantu Philosophy triggered off this debate of existence of African Philosophy as well as African identity. Temples' was against dominant belief which reigned among the Europeans, Regarding Africans as irrational people. According to Bantu, there exists a common bond between all human beings and it is through this bond and through our interaction with our fellow human beings that we discover our human qualities<sup>3</sup>. Masolo in his book entitled, African philosophy in Search of Identity explains the design of contemporary African philosophy. He expatiates that African philosophy is a philosophy seeking its identity and destiny<sup>4</sup>. The South African nobel laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu describes Bantu in this way:

Africans have this thing called UBUNTU... the essence of being human, It is part of the gift that African will others the world, It embraces hospitality, caring about others, willing to go the extra mile for the sake of others. We believe a person is person through another person that my humanity is caught up, bound up and inextricable dehumanize myself. The solitary individual is a contradiction in terms and, therefore, you seek to work for the common good because your humanity comes into its own community, in belonging<sup>5</sup>

In many ways Bantu philosophy funds a unique position between the objective and subjective approaches to identity. This is very well expressed by Dion Foster.

. . . if one were to apply the dialogical conceptual framework of I-thou developed by Martin Buber in his philosophical *essayich wi Du* (1923), one would be able to show that in 'the African worldview it is neither the 'I' (individual) nor the 'Thou' (community) that takes ontological primary. Rather the ontological primary is focused on, the hyphen, the 'between', of the I- Thou.<sup>6</sup>

However, many Africans started philosophizing in response to the Tempel's work, to show that there has been African philosophy before the advent of Tempel's work. Ethnophilosophy coined by Hountonji, Sage philosophy, Professional African philosophy and nationalistic-ideological philosophy.

### THE TERM AFRICA WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Understanding the word African can be said to involve Delphic injection, "know thyself"<sup>7</sup> it therefore means that for the African to conquer his current battle for progress and development, or to overcome his social, psychological, religious and political predicament, he must equip himself with genuine self knowledge and self understanding. Noting the importance of the Socratic injunction "Mall know thyself" Bernard Groethuysen write "*Man wishes to live consciously: he wishes to know how things are with him. He is unknown to himself and wished to know himself. He has lived without knowing who he is and now he seeks to become conscious of himself and his life*"<sup>8</sup>

The puzzles of the meaning and the understanding of a particular concept become obverse. The word African involves what D. Opatu describes as some methodological tangles. He writes;

To seek to investigate the meaning of the word "African" is a difficult and complex undertaking, part of this difficult and complexity arises from the fact that we have to do this in a language not indigenous to African. How can we explicate "African" without excising the Anglo- cultural elements which have gone into the historical constitution of the meaning of "African"? This is especially important when it is remembered that the word African is the creation of Europe<sup>9</sup>.

Thus, we can investigate the meaning of the term "African" from several perspectives.

### AFRICA DEFINED IN GEOGRAPHICAL TERMS

Geographically, Africa is said to be the second largest of the earth's seven continents, with adjacent Islands covering about 30, 330,000 of km (11,699,000 5 of m), or about 22 percent of the world's total land area<sup>10</sup>.

She is divided between the north and the sub-Saharan Africa. Northern part is dominated by cancasiod people, the Berbers and the Arabs, while the sub-Sahara Africans are Negroid. With about 3,000 ethnic groups and over 2,000 languages. Though more than 50 languages

have at least 500,000 speakers each, the majority of African languages are spoken by relatively five people apart from Swahili and Hausa<sup>11</sup>.

Emphatically the word "African" here connotes, not just a mere geographically land location, but human beings, ideas, and in (act all that is found within her geography. Talking about authentic African identity is talking about the welfare of the Africans and their environs.

Many scholars refers to Africa to be the landscape covered by the blacks. Here it implicitly refers to a human person indigenous to Africa, that is, one whose original-place is Africa. However, this definition does not meet our search of an authentic African. Ali Mazruiposes the problem in terms of European map makers. In his word as quoted by Eze Onyeama:

Is Europe North of Africa? Is Europe up and African down in geographical location as well as in income, power and global Status? Of course the maps says Europe is north of Africa(and therefore up) but that decision was arbitrary and made Primarily by Europe map-makers. Whether Europe if above Africa or below is purely relative because it depends upon vantage point .in the cosmos. from which an observer is looking at planet earth.<sup>12</sup>

In his way, he has radicalized what ordinarily would appear 'unproblematic. He went further to assert that Africa as a continent is a creation of Europe, an arbitrary creation for that matter.

Mazrui, further stressed that the word African was originally used to describe "ANCIENT ROMAN" colonial province in present day Tunisia and western Algeria and he traces the use of the word to apply to all of the countries in present day African to western Europeans. Europe arbitrary acts have created problems for African to the extent that we like to talk in terms of black African to the exclusion of southern African and some northern African countries. The consequences are great, as one continues to search for authentic, permanent national and continent identities.

### **AFRICA DEFINED AS AN IDEOLOGICAL TERM**

The definition of Africa in ideological term brings to the minds of the African people their encounter with the western world in history. It abstracts the basic substratum in the historical discovery and relationship which conditioned the basic idea about Africa and Africans.

EzeOnyema noted that African's relationship with Europe has always been to the advantage of Europe<sup>14</sup>. This attitude has been fostered by relations of production between the two continents. During this period of production relationship, African able-bodied men and women were forcefully transported to England and America where they were physically exploited and dehumanized. This period of inhuman enslavement saw the Europeans conceptualization of Africa as dark, or the darkest continent. The word "African" was tantamount in meaning to such other terms as "savagery" reservoir of crude energy, barbaric, sub-human, primitive e.t.c.

Europeans further brought themselves willingly and voluntarily in Africa, where they posed themselves as the visible God to African, masters (colonialists) exploiting Africa, its land, its people and its culture. Starting from their arrival African become conceptualize as a dark continent that need "light" to open the eyes of "a continent without philosophy, rationality, civilization, culture, religion, government etc.

However, the meaning of the word "Africa" historically has been changed, Africa is now seen as undeveloped, its political system, education, economy, technology, etc.

### **AFRICA DEFINED AS AN ETHNIC/ RACIAL TERM**

Africa is used as a racial or ethnic term. When it is used as a racial term, it is presupposed that the continent of Africa is populated by a race with distinct characteristics and common feature. (even though race is not a biological concept but a social one) is the black darkness of the skin. While in its ethnic term it is assumed that she is characterized by one ethnic identity applicable to other group of the continent. As a racial term. *"Africa " has inherited a lot of prejudices and stereotypes inbuilt in race discourse owing to deliberate connivance or ignorance of Europe about Africa and its people."*<sup>15</sup>

EzeOnyema asserted that "In this regard it becomes even more problematic" <sup>16</sup>For these attitudes help to create a fertile ground for the determination of the meaning of "Africa" because. *"The dominant picture is that Africa is the home of black people. "This has heeded to the situation in which Africa has pejoratively been described as a dark continent."*<sup>17</sup>

### **AFRICA DEFINED AS EPISTEMIC TERM**

Imposition of euro-centric curricula on African educational systems and the attempt to de-Europeans these, as well as the quest for relevance and commitment to the problematic 'African condition combined to draw the attention of "African" scholars to the need for investigating and isolating certain aspects or features of knowledge and reality that can be characteristically called African.

The need for the construction of educational reality from an African perspective became an imperative not only to Africanist, but also to some concerned governments in Africa. Africa as an epistemic term seeks to ascertain in what ways and by what criteria any idea, concept, phenomena, event etc. could in an epistemic sense, be said to be Africa.

### **AFRICA DEFINED AS A METAPHYSICAL TERM**

The being of a thing is that which makes it what it is, rather than any other thing. All that is, is being if the above assertion is true, then the concept of Africa, is that "africanness" is a thing that makes or marks it African instead of being, Asian, American, or European. "Africanness "is that abstract or mental concept which can be visualized through or with the eye of the mind. The word Africa therefore is more than race or color or linguistic phenomena, it could also be highly articulated with an abstract metaphysical term. In the words of Orizu.

*Africa is not a country, it is composed of many  
countries, Africa is not a race but is composed of many*

*racess blended together from time immemorial. Africa is not a cultural unit-there are many cultural units -- Africa is not a linguistics unit, the languages are legion, yet inspite of all these apparent differences there is still that which we can describe .as "African", just as there are things European or Asian or American despite all infernal diversities in culture, languages, and ethnic origins.<sup>18</sup>*

*C.B Okolo on his part justifies the metaphysical identification of Africans as "A being- with. Whether the African is one people or many is insignificant ... we rather assert that the African is easily identifiable ontologically or a being- in the African- word. He is not just a being, but a being-with",<sup>19</sup>*

## **AFRICA AND AFRICAN EXAMINED**

So far our discourse has been centered on what Africa means, we started with the problems associated with the term and later to the different ways Africa has been conceptualized namely geographical, ideological, ethnic, racial, epistemic and finally metaphysical, which is the climax of Africa identity. From the forgoing we them turn to the meaning of African or to the use of the word of some African scholars" Africanity".

## **AFRICAN OR AFRICANITY: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

Being an African or Africanity is thus a horizon of experience of life and living, of thought and of thinking that centers on Africa as a home and wellspring; as a concept, and as a realm. An attempt towards the elucidating the question of "who is an authentic African"? involves deeper understanding of thy element of nature and culture, of formation and information, of subjectivity and objectivity that forms individual attitudes and dispositions towards reality. Maduakulam Osuagwu X-rays the criteria of africanity with the following parameters; as quoted by Dickson Obonyano:

1. The ethno-African parameter: this is defined by author's nativity, tribe, physiology and culture.
2. The spatio-temporal africanity parameter: identifies the African space and time
3. The lego- African parameter refers to the enabling academic, civil or ecclesiastical laws making an expatriate African.
4. The techno-African parameter that concerns the authors productions spatially if it is concerned with the relevant African focus.

## **CATEGORIES OF AFRICANS**

Izu M. Onyeocha in his article "*Deciding on the real African*" identified categories of people that can be considered as African. There are as follows:

**NATIONAL AFRICANS:** they are all those whose roots are African through and through, born in Africa and are in African environment, they drunk deep into the styles, systems and values prevailing in Africa. Their base on traditional culture is informed with the beliefs about the nature of humans as members of the society, beliefs about the ethics, which members should regulate human behavior towards members of the same society, and even higher beliefs of religious and spiritual nature. In this category are those who are citizens that are in the African continent.

**MIGRATORY AFRICANS:** Those born of the African stock, where in or outside of African, but who were brought up in non-African environment. Most of the time' both parents have been African stock, but choose to settle outside of African and raise their families. Some of their children remained permanently in their place of upbringing. Some of the white settlers in southern African immigrated to the various places they find themselves now, apparently in pursuit of their business and other interests. With time they develop an affinity for African and settle permanently in Africa.

**HYBRID AFRICANS:** They are those that have one parent that is African, while the other is non- African. In this category are those who for professional or educational, socio-cultural or other personal reasons live outside of Africa and raise their children abroad.

**ADOPTIVE AFRICANS:** There are those who are non-African extraction but have taken up residence in Africa, their roots are elsewhere, but whose nurture or culture is firmly based in Africa. Among the people in this category are those married to Africans and thereby established domicile in Africa.

**CONQUEST AFRICANS:** This term refers to those whose presence in African is as a result of conquest. They came, they saw, and they conquered, Conquest gave them the right to occupy a place in Africa. The white Africans of southern Africa overcame opposition from the indigenous inhabitants and established' settlement, for themselves. They raised their families and over several generations their descendants have known no other home. than Africa regardless of their light skin.

**PILGRIM AFRICANS:** Some missionaries to Africa neatly fit into this category. Although they might be born and brought up outside of Africa, they consider Africa as coheirs to the world heritage, Without pretensions, they find fulfillment in working for and among Africans, and are happy to live out their lives among them.

### **IDENTITY AS A CONCEPT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

The trust of this section is to see what identity entails from which we can proceed towards the explication of African identity. Although survey of some 'consulted literatures on identity shows a remarkable aversion to the definition of identity exhibited by scholar, this aversion could be that identity posed a difficult problem to define, where the scholars boycotted it entirely, or that identity may have been viewed by some scholars as an everyday term whose meaning everybody knows, that defining it in their works is seen as inconsequential. It could also be that some scholars who attempt a definition focused on specific aspects of identity: personal, social, ethnic, cultural, nominate etc,

Identity etymological is derived from the Latin word "idem ens" which means: the same things, unity, sameness and coherency as opposed to "schizophrenia"<sup>20</sup> A more technical definition portrays it as:

The quality condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties, or in particular qualities under consideration, absolute or essential sameness or oneness.<sup>21</sup>

New Webster's dictionary of the English language (Deluxe encyclopedia edition) defined entity as:

The state or fact of being the same one; the state or fact of remaining the same one, as under varying aspects or condition; the condition of being oneself or itself, and not another, the condition or character that distinguishes a person or a thing; Individuality; sameness in nature or qualities, exact likeness.<sup>22</sup>

Longman Dictionary of contemporary English agrees with Webster's definition of "Sameness," "individuality," but fails to mark the important aspect of identity which is, its continuous varying conditions. Longman views identity as 'the qualities and attitudes that a person or 'group of people have, that make them different from other people"<sup>23</sup> Longman's opinion about identity includes group or communal identity that marks out as different people. The communal or group identity may be collective, group, national tribal or cultural identities.<sup>24</sup>

A definition of identity by Philip Bricker holds that identity is that "relation that everything bears to itself and to nothing else."<sup>25</sup> Bricker's own definitions emphasize the tendency of identity to exclude the other. He sees no role for the other in demarcating the boundary of the relation he writes about. Furthermore Burke and Stets definition of identity seems to take care of the above short coming as it captures the role of society, and the other in identity , formation. As defined by Burke and Stets, identity is:

The set of meaning that defines who. one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identifies him or has as a unique person. For example, individuals have meaning that apply to themselves when they are a student, worker), when they are a member of fraternity, when they belong to the democratic party, when they are Latin(these are membership in particular groups) or when they claim they are outgoing individuals or moral persons (these are personal characteristics that identity themselves as unique person).<sup>26</sup>

## **DIFFERENT CONCEPTS OF IDENTITY EXAMINED**

### **I. NOMINAL IDENTITY:**

According to sociologist Richard Jenkins of University of Sheffield, nominal identity is the name to which one identifies, or calls oneself (i.e. general "African-American," "Irish," "Straight," "Gay," "Female," "Male,")<sup>27</sup> Whereas virtual **identity** is the experience of that identity, "The latter is, in a sense, what the name means; this is primarily a matter of its

consequences for those who bear it, and can change while the nominal identity remains the same (and vice versa).

Among those who self-identify as "gay," the term may not confer the same experience for two people or even between various geographical or cultural regions. Similarly; while one may talk about a "chair," "chair" itself can entail many forms, from arm chair to ladder back to even tree stump, if the experience of "chair" is something upon which a person sits.

Pierre Bourdieu uses the term nominal identity in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* to mean both that which the identity of a subject is named and also where identity is an insignificant measurement or representation of the "perceived reality" of a subject or phenomenon.<sup>28</sup> To further clarify, for Bourdieu nominal identity can often mean "face value" or "appearance." He often mentions the term nominal identity in order to illustrate the idea of a more complex reality, beyond the name, within the studied subject.

## 2. PERSONAL IDENTITY:

Personal identity is the unique numerical identity of persons through time. That is to say, the necessary and sufficient conditions under which a person at one time and a person at another time can be said to be the same person, persisting through time. In the modern philosophy of mind, this concept of personal identity is sometimes referred to as the diachronic problem of personal identity. The synchronic problem is grounded on the question of what features or traits characterize a given person at a time. Identity is an issue for Continental philosophy, analytic philosophy and African philosophy. A key question in continental philosophy is, in what sense can we maintain the modern conception of identity, while realizing many of our prior assumptions about the world are incorrect.

## 3. ETHNIC IDENTITY:

Ethnic identity is a "social identity arising through group formation, individual identification with a group, and interaction between different ethnic groups. Henry E. Brady and Cynthia S. Kaplan compiled a study called "Categorically Wrong? Nominal versus Graded Measures of Ethnic Identity" that took a look at ethnicity as a nominal identity. Their study asked whether or not "the attitudes of members of the group with the more salient identity can be completely explained by its nominal identity while the attitudes of the members of the group with less salient identity require a graded measure of ethnicity."<sup>29</sup>

Brady and Kaplan focused on the country Estonia, where they posited two groups: "Estonians," and one that they call the "Slavs," a collective group of Russians, Ukrainians, or Byelorussians. They chose this geographical area in particular because of the "centrality of ethnicity in the politics of transition in the USSR"<sup>30</sup> This study looked at different variables such as "Self-identification and passport questions about nationality", media usage (such as television, radio, or newspaper, whether it was the Estonia language Republic television or Russian-language media), individuals who identify themselves with another nationality, and the language used at home.



Brady and Kaplan concluded that "ethnicity is not always a nominal characteristic,"<sup>31</sup> for these two groups in Estonia. It is only nominal when most salient. "Ethnic identity ... causes individuals within a group to form their attitudes based upon their nominal identity."<sup>32</sup>

Individuals may generalize themselves in a certain category such as their nationality, but 'when it comes down to variables of different degrees in formulating their ethnicity, it is no longer nominal. It is their way of dividing themselves from a generalized name.

#### **4. CULTURAL IDENTITY:**

Cultural identity is the identity of a group or culture or of an individual as far as one is influenced by one's belonging to a group or culture. Cultural identity is similar to and overlaps with, identity politics. Various modern cultural studies and social theories have investigated cultural identity. In recent decades, a new form of identification has emerged which breaks down the understanding of the individual as a coherent whole subject to a collection of various cultural identifiers. These cultural identifiers may be the result of various conditions including: location, gender, race, history, nationality, language, sexuality, religious beliefs, ethnicity, aesthetics, and even food. The divisions between cultures can be very fine in some parts of the world, especially places such as Canada or the United States, where the population is ethnically diverse' and social unity is based primarily on common social values and beliefs.

As a "historical reservoir", culture is an important factor in shaping identity. Some critics of cultural identity argue that the preservation of cultural identity, being based upon difference, is a divisive force in society, and that cosmopolitanism gives individuals a greater sense of shared citizenship. When considering practical association in international society, states, may share an inherent part of their 'make up' that gives common ground and an alternative means of identifying with each other. Nations provide the framework for culture identities called external cultural reality, which influences the unique internal cultural realities of the individuals within the nation.

#### **5. SOCIAL IDENTITY:**

A social identity is the portion of an individual's self-concept derived from perceived membership in a relevant social group. As originally formulated by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s and the 1980s, social identity theory introduced the concept of a social identity as a way in which to explain intergroup behaviour.<sup>33</sup>

Social identity theory is best described as a theory that predicts certain intergroup behaviours on the basis of perceived group status differences, the perceived legitimacy and stability of those status differences, and the perceived ability to move 'from one group to another. This contrasts with occasions where the term social identity theory is used to refer to general theorizing about human social selves. Moreover, and although some researchers have treated it as such, social identity theory was never intended to be a general theory of social categorization. It was awareness of the limited scope of social identity theory that Jed John Turner and colleagues to develop a cousin theory in the form of self-categorization theory, which built on the insights of social identity theory to produce a more general account of self and group processes. The term social identity approach, or social identity perspective, is

suggested for describing the joint contributions of both social identity theory and self-categorization theory.

## **6. DIGITAL IDENTITY:**

Digital identity is a concept that prevails in the domains of cyberspace, and is defined as a set of data that uniquely describes a person or a thing (sometimes referred to as subject or entity) and contains information about the subject's relationships to other entities. The social identity that an internet user establishes through digital identities in cyberspace is referred to as online identity. .

A critical problem in cyberspace is knowing with whom you are interacting. In essence, the problem is that "on the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog." Currently there are no ways to precisely determine the identity of a person in digital space. Even though there are attributes associated to a person's digital identity, these attributes or even identities can be changed, masked or dumped and new ones created. Despite the fact that there are many authentication systems and digital identifiers that try to address these problems, there is still a need for a unified and verified identification system in cyberspace. Thus, there are issues of privacy and security related to digital identity.

## **7. ONLINE IDENTITY:**

An online identity, internet identity, or internet person is a social identity that an Internet user establishes in online communities and websites. It can also be considered as an actively constructed presentation of oneself. Although some people prefer to use their real names online, some internet users prefer to be anonymous, identifying themselves by means of pseudonyms, which reveal varying amounts of personally identifiable information. An online identity may even be determined by a user's relationship to a certain social group they are a part of online. Some can even be deceptive about their identity.

In some online contexts, including Internet forums, MUDs, instant messaging, and massively multiplayer online games, users can represent themselves visually by choosing an avatar, an icon-sized graphic image. Avatars, digital representations of oneself or proxy that stand in for a person in virtual world, are how users express their online identity. As other users interact with an established online identity, it acquires a reputation, which enables them to decide whether the identity is worthy of trust. Some websites also use the user's IP address to track their online identities using methods such as tracking cookies.

The concept of the personal self, and how this is influenced by emerging technologies, are subjects of research in fields such as psychology and sociology. The online disinhibition effect is a notable example, referring to a concept of unwise and uninhibited behaviour on the internet, arising as a result of anonymity and audience gratification.

## **8. IDENTITY THEFT:**

Identity theft is a form of stealing of someone's identity in which someone pretends to be someone else by assuming that person's identity, typically in order to access resources or obtain credit and other benefits in that person's name. The victim of identity theft (here

meaning the person whose identity has been assumed by the identity thief) can suffer adverse consequences if they are held accountable for the perpetrator's actions. Identity theft someone uses another's personally identifying information, like his name, identifying number, or credit card number, without his permission, to commit fraud or other crimes.

From the forgoing, identity can be said to mean the series of relationship which a thing has with other things; which marks, it off from other things while at the same time uniting it with other things. It expresses what a thing is, and at the same time what it is not. It includes and excludes at the same time as it specifies a range of beingness.

#### IV

#### **IDENTITY CRISIS AND ITS TRAUMA IN AFRICA: A HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

Africa may have lagged behind Europe in terms of technology; however, long before the coming of Europeans to the continent Africans possessed social and political philosophies as valid as those of their European counterparts. The traditional African society was characterized by egalitarianism and humanism, the value and dignity of man were highly placed at the center of the society. Then with the contact of Europeans and Africans, African personality became alienated to the extent that her humanity became doubted, not only that but her culture and history as well, this occasioned our current discourse "AFRICAN IDENTITY CRISIS" this contact with Europeans may be grouped into three stages closely interwoven together. The first stage is the period of Trans-Atlantic and Trans-Saharan slave trade, followed by the second stage which is the period when the unrelenting Europeans came and imposed themselves as the masters of the African people, exploiting the immense natural and human resources of her land. While the third stage is the period of independence. Some scholars also maintained that there were many other factors that militated the loss of Identity of the traditional Africans. Anthropologists generally are of the view that climatic conditions (geography) of the Sub-Saharan Africa which brought tropical diseases like yellow fever and malaria contributed a lot in distorting the African identity.

Chancellor Williams capture it as follows:

The blacks found themselves cut off from all sea coasts that then mattered, hemmed in from all directions, and confined within narrower limits. Thus, they became a wondering people, forever migrating in their own vast homeland, and fragmenting from great United Nations into countless little splinter societies, becoming so isolated from each other that each formed a new language of its own, considering themselves quite different from their original brothers who were then regarded as strangers and enemies in the intertribal wars that ensued over the inhabited land ... the long, long struggle to take from the Blacks whatever they had of human worth, their land and all wealth therein, their

bodies, their souls, and their minds was a process of depersonalization, dehumanization.<sup>34</sup>

The societal contacts between African and Europe though with some advantages, dealt a triple blow on Africa as stated early, which has left her in the shadow of her death, ban of Africa's political, social- economic problems. From the forgoing, a brief detail of Africans journey becomes pertinent, of which we now turn to.

## **SLAVERY AND SLAVE TRADE IN AFRICA**

The issue of slave trade in Africa is mostly looked at from one direction. Some people allot the blame is mostly allotted to Europeans alone. But the culpability of the slave trade in Africa is shared by Africans who accepted the gift of the Europeans and exchanged them with their people, as well as the Europeans who offered gifts to the Africans. However according to Roland Oliver in the epoch of human history, slavery was a common practice for so long as men fought with each other, they have also taken captives.<sup>35</sup> In the ancient period, slaves were common to every nation and the economies of Greece and Rome were dependent on slave labour. So taking people into slavery was not something new to humanity. What necessitated the slave trade in Africa? What made human beings to become the objects of buying and selling? The exchange of human beings with worthless things like mirrors, guns, gins e.t.c? One may ask. The simple response so far was the need for labourers at sugar plantations in Europe. Rodney on the above view according to Vitalis-Anthony Okekepointed that:

Nevertheless, it is acceptable to talk about the trade in slave to refer to the shipment of captives from Africa to various other parts of the world where they live and work as the property of Europeans. The title of this section is deliberately chosen to call attention to the fact that shipments were all by Europeans to the fact that shipments were all by Europeans to the markets controlled by Europeans, and this was in the interest of European capitalists and nothing else.<sup>36</sup>

However to say that the shipment of slaves was done by Europeans alone is a blatant lie. Africans were directly involved because they presented some people to be sold out. Africans interest in the business gave rise to the trade, without knowing the worth of what they were losing. Despite the fact that Africans were involved, there were certain individuals in Africa that fought against the trade such great men are Don Affonso, king of Congo, Tomba and Agaja Trudo of Dahomy, all the efforts of these Africans were futile because they were unsuccessful at which some of them were taken into slavery themselves.

Rodney saw "slavery as a basic factor in African underdevelopment", because millions of people carted away meant a reduction of the productive capacity, especially when those sought after were those at the prime of their youths. Slave trade in Africa was an assault on the dignity of African man. Elechi Amadi in conformity asserts as quoted by Vitalis-Anthony Okeke that:

It is fair to say that all parties to slave deal are equally morally culpable. Slavery was possible in those days in its extreme form because the concept of the universal brotherhood of man was unborn. Even today it is not fully accepted. There are people who are still reluctant to attribute full humanity to others. Until this attitude outgrown slavery will continue to exist, at least in its subtler forms.<sup>37</sup>

## COLONIALISM AND CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

It is an unmistakably fact that colonialism is the nomenclature for the new coat of the western violence on Africans as Frantz Fanon would put it. The slave trade in principle came to an end with the industrial revolution when slave trade was declared null and void or illegal. The quest of the colonial masters to prove the inferiority and inhumanity of Africans resulted to colonialism. According to Blyden:

Divines and politicians, physiologists and scientists exhausted the resources of their intellect in the endeavour to prove the Negro only quasi- human, an excellent animal, but only an animal born to serve a superior race.<sup>38</sup>

Fanon described this colonial situation from a racial point of point of view. This situation involves a contact with another race in which the minority alien race is actually the sociological superior race.<sup>39</sup> This superiority is based on the military might of the alien race. In this colonial situation all sorts of oppression and exploitation were experienced. The native was exploited socially, economically, politically, racially, psychologically and culturally, it is a world where totalitarian despotism was upheld. According to Fanon:

Racism... is only one segment of a vast whole: that of systematized oppression of a people. We witness the destruction of cultural values... the social panorama is restructured; values are flaunted, crushed, emptied.<sup>40</sup>

With colonialism new system of values was imposed, not proposed or debated but affirmed by the heavy weight of canons and sabres. Racism made the native an object in the hands of the colonizer. He was tortured, violated, exploited, and maimed. And this touches the very depth of the native soul which 'makes him to question the essence or quiddity of his being. Fanon puts it thus:

This object man, without means of existing, without *raison d'etre*, is broken in the very depths of his substance. The desire to live, to continue becomes more and more indecisive, more and more phantomlike.<sup>41</sup>

Because of this structural violence and the rampant dehumanization inherent in the colonial system, Fanon described it as a Manichean world. it is a world blockaded into compartments: we have the native quarters and European quarters, school for the native and school for the Europeans, Lordship for the settlers, servitude for the natives; prosperity and influence for the colonizer's crushing poverty and want for the colonized. As such, two opposing forces co-existed in it. In the words of Renate Zahar:

The field of force of colonial situation is marked by two antagonistic poles: the colonizer and the colonized. The prosperity and the privileges of the former are directly based on the exploitation and pauperization of the other.<sup>43</sup>

Racism, so glibly denies the humanness of the native, that it deprives him of all material means of existence as well of their language. Oguejiofor captured it in his following words:

The sign of modern learning, for him became how Europeanized he was, that is, how much he was accustomed to what is foreign, and how estranged he was from his own milieu. The concept 'foreign' quickly acquired and added meaning 'superior', Fluency in the languages of the colonizers became a respectable mark of leaning, and the acquisition of such languages was accompanied by the forgetfulness of one's own native language, in the sprawling cities of Lagos, Kinshasa, Nairobi and Dakar, many children of highly educated parents are unable to speak their native languages, and their parents are able to exhibit the phenomenon as a sign of high social status.<sup>44</sup>

## NEO-COLONIALISM IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

Jean-Paul Sartre while writing the preface to Fanon's "Wretched of the Earth" called the African colonial independence a "simulacrum of phoney independence". Because it had a gradual killing disease. The colonialist giving in for independence gave birth to a new system of enslavement called "neo-colonialism", Neo-colonialism resembles indirect rule because the colonized seems independent, but its economic and political policies are controlled from outside. They handed power over to their lackeys, who were regarded as: ...Good boys, happy under imperialist manipulation and guidance....

Neo-colonialism is the reformation or reinforcement of the old ideology in a crafty way. Ojukwu defined it thus:

Neocolonialism...is precisely the collusion and compromise between foreign imperialists, a section of native comprador bourgeois and reactionary elements, to maintain colonial rule under new forms and methods, whilst checking and opposing, the movement of the broad masses. Neocolonialism is based on fraud, the fraud of national independence. It thrives on the pseudo-intellectual... and is defended by violence.<sup>45</sup>

In effect, colonial education meant selecting a few Africans to participate in the domination and exploitation 'of the continent as a whole. At independence, the African nationalist did not deem it fit to go back to their old way of politicking, rather they ended up replacing the colonial masters. Oguejiofor asserted thus:

This means that with the exit of the colonial masters, and their divide-and -rule tactics, the emergent African political

leaders, instead of working for national cohesion, further worsened the political quagmire by using ethnic jealousy and conflict for their selfish ends. In a majority of these countries, the "free election ushering in independence was the last."<sup>46</sup>

From the above, it is clear that in Africa countries today, things are not even different. The situation still remains the same. Achebe maintains that "the problem of Nigeria is nothing but the problem of leadership". And so with the rest of African countries. Ojukwu have this to add about Africa using Nigeria as an example: '

Whenever independence is negotiated, colonial government gives place to a neo-colonial government. This is what happened to Nigeria ... A major tragedy of Nigeria is the second phase of our independence struggle has not been allowed to take place. The sum total of Nigeria independence became and has remained the symbolic replacement by black faces of white faces- the content and direction of government has not changed. Here, in Nigeria, the departing imperialists handed over the country to a committee of incompatibles, composed of conservatives, on the one hand and pan- Nigerian nationalists and petit-bourgeois radical socialists, on the other.<sup>47</sup>

Ojukwu can be said not to be far from the truth, for the Nigerian politics is a routing game of some set of people who called themselves born to rule, while others becomes born to slave. Neo-colonialism in African nation states was and is still possible through our politicians, because they are corrupt and incompetent.

## V

### CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS:

As most often said by scholars, that the being of a thing is that which makes it what it is, rather than any other thing. All that is, is being, if the above assertion is true, then the concept of Africa and her identity is "africanness" a quality that makes or marks it African instead of being white, Asian, American, European. From the above assertions the researchers therefore recommend that firstly, Africans irrespective of their categories should uphold, admire, cherish and inculcate the spirits of "Africanness" that is the totality of Africans world view, which can be seen in her culture, norms, customs, socio-economic and political system to their offspring.

Secondly, The African leaders should also go back to their roots and introspectively discover the real African person "a selfless being, a being with others, a communion being, a being that accord the fellow being dignity, a being that sees the sacredness of human being and not an object of manipulations e.t.c ".In discharging their leadership and not filler-ship duties.

Thirdly, seminars and symposia should be organized by scholars and proper awareness and invitation should be made to the general public to inform them the evils in the White man scheme. As against the usual seminars organized by scholars and invitations limited to scholars as well, for any truth that is known by two persons out of one million may not yield

the desired result. The researchers therefore concluded that the proper adherent to above recommendations will not only assist in rediscovering of African identity, but also help to curtail the social, economic and political problems in the Africa continents, such as bribery and corruption, bad economy, bad leadership, e.t.c. because all these came to be in Africa as a result of colonialism. Not only that, the above principle would drastically reduce the copy-cat mentality of Africans towards the Whiteman culture, that whatever that is white, is gold, be it a rotten vulture, it is a delicious meat.



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