

A PHILOSOPHY FOR INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE THIRD REPUBLIC

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Introduction

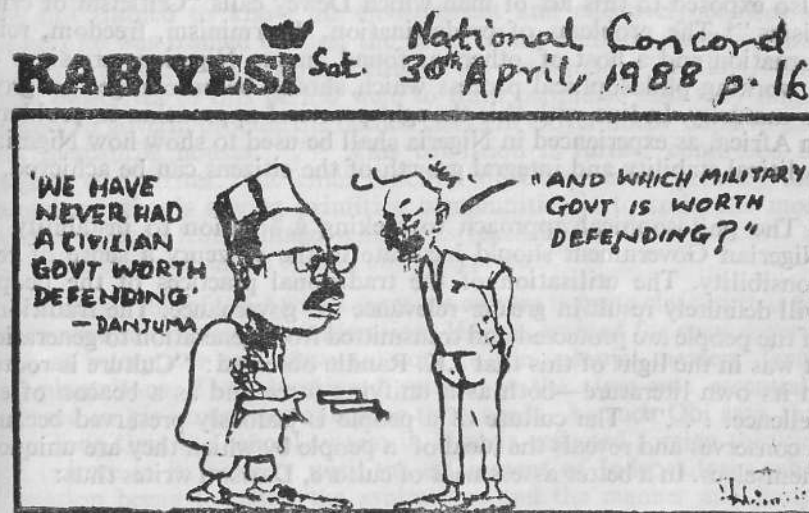
Nigeria has experienced a long period of instability since her Independence in 1960. It is most disturbing that after ruling ourselves for more than twenty-seven years, we are still groping in the dark for a system which would most suit the Economic, Political and Social Development of our beloved Nation, Nigeria. In the urgent desire to gain stability in the country, a lot has been sacrificed by a few responsible Nigerians to no avail, because the number of sincere and dedicated citizens falls below ten percent (10%) of the entire Nigerian population. Over ninety-percent (90%) of the citizenry indulge in grave immorality, different shades of corruption, violence, abuse of power, tribalism, armed robbery, examination malpractice and very many other acts of indecency. How can we expect stability under these conditions and circumstances?

The urge for power and quick money has plunged our country into untold hardship. We can all recall that since Independence in 1960, we have had two civilian governments which were toppled by the Military who believed they had the magic wand to solve all our problems, ranging from the political to the economic, social and religious issues. Despite their good intentions the Army is composed of true Nigerians who have connections with their immediate families, tribes and friends. While they have the opportunity to stay in office, they are advised to accumulate as much wealth as possible for they may never pass through that way again. This attitude leads to corruption and the irresponsible acquisition of wealth at the expense of the governed. On this issue Akinkuotu says: "Certainly, falsehood has been traded many times for truth. But truth can only be suppressed for some time." ¹

The problem of governance in Nigeria presents peculiar problems because we seem to have abandoned our traditional ways of doing things with honesty. Moreover, the practice of communal labour has been relegated to the background, resulting in selfishness and greed. Hence on January 1, 1986, the President, Ibrahim Babagida inaugurated the Political Bureau with the specific charge to find a new political system for Nigeria. This new system, it was hoped, would solve the socio-political problems of this Nation. During the period of the political debate some proposed a diarchy, a triarchy and Afrocracy. Meritocracy and many other systems were also proposed for the governance of Nigeria

In these proposals it appeared to have been confirmed that the system was the reason why we could not succeed in having a stable and progressive government. This assertion is as misleading as it is false. Nigeria has practised both the British and American Systems of Government which have failed woefully. The military messiahs do not seem to have done much better. At this point, it could be said without fear of contradiction that the fault is not in the system but in the operators. If the British have survived with the Parliamentary System and the Americans with the Presidential System, why has Nigeria failed to succeed with these systems? In accordance with the truth of the matter, Chief Enahoro asserts.

"The truth is that the operation of the parliamentary system of government, or of the presidential system of government, for of the military system of government in Nigeria has been subject to strains and stresses caused by the peculiarities of the Nigerian situation—for example, our sheer inexperience, the unwillingness of some political leaders to make the personal sacrifices necessary to unify the highest levels of government, of functionaries unfamiliar with the give-and-take of liberal democratic politics".²



In the pursuit of personal gain and corrupt enrichment of self, the leaders of Nigeria have remained in the platonic cave. They have forgotten the communal aspect of the human vocation which makes the in-

dividual complete in his/her association with others. This individualistic and egoistic tendency in the leaders has plunged our country into the doldrums. This essay is, therefore, an attempt at proposing an operative philosophy within the framework of which our citizens can participate more actively and meaningfully for the political stability of our Country. Dr. Ilori recalls that there are abundant evidences of decline in family and social life and that the substantial virtues of the past, which had contributed to the greatness of Nigeria have disappeared.³ I wish to highlight a practical African Philosophy which could fruitfully be utilised for development and civilization.

The Role of Traditional Practices In Philosophy

Philosophy is a word derived from two Greek words, *Philos* (friend) and *Sophia* (wisdom), which literally means friend of wisdom or lover of wisdom. If the philosopher is interested in the acquisition of knowledge, normally the process starts from his environment, family, relations and cultural beliefs of the people. The debate on African philosophy still rages on in some areas. However, we are not debating the existence or not of African philosophy since the urge to know is also experienced in the African, especially the Nigerian who consciously reflects and reacts to reality as it presents itself to him. As long as the Nigerian is faced with the vicissitudes of life like every other race on earth, he is also exposed to this act of man which Dewey calls "Criticism of criticisms."⁴ The problems of predestination, determinism, freedom, reincarnation and a host of others as found among Nigerians are signs of a working philosophical process which should be encouraged to grow to maturity. In line with this thought practical approaches to problems in Africa, as experienced in Nigeria shall be used to show how Nigerian political stability and integral growth of the citizens can be achieved.

The philosophical approach to seeking a solution to instability in Nigerian Government should inculcate in the citizenry a sense of responsibility. The utilisation of the traditional practices of the people will definitely result in greater relevance for governance. The traditions of the people are protected and transmitted from generation to generation. It was in the light of this that J.K. Randle observed: "Culture is rooted in its own literature—both as a unifying force and as a beacon of excellence. . . ."⁵ The culture of a people is jealously preserved because it conserves and reveals the ideal of a people by which they are uniquely themselves. In a better assessment of culture, Dawson writes thus:

Culture is the form of society. The society without culture is a formless society—a crowd or a collection of individuals brought together by the needs of the moment while the stronger a culture is, the more completely does it inform and transform the diverse human material of which it is composed.

It must be acknowledged that there can be no true progress and economic—political stability in Nigeria until we have allowed our cultural processes and principles to become operative in our lives. Foreign systems and programmes which have no relationship with ours can only operate superficially and without positive results. But familiarity with and implementation of our highly valued hereditary and communal principles will go a long way in establishing peace and order in our communities for "the African puts more stress on the solidarity of the group and on the communion of the members than on the autonomy and the contributions and needs of the individuals".⁶ This attitude does not eliminate the individual and it is not inimical to the progress of the individual. Rather, it reminds us that the African concept of reality is holistic. In this manner the African socio-cultural and political institutions and kinship are kept in a state of systemic equilibrium.⁷ Consequently, reality in African thought is conceived as one and homogeneous, though what is primarily real is spiritual and the world of natural phenomena is part of this reality.⁸ This philosophy makes for quick and genuine development of people through the motivation of individuals to contribute towards the growth of their communities.

The history of Education in Nigeria manifests that our culture has been largely neglected. The needs, aspirations, hopes and expectations of the people were neglected. During the colonial days, the Nigerian was not trained to know his environment and effectively control it. At best he was trained to meet the needs of his colonial masters. Thus he was alienated from his own culture. As observed by Dr. Ilori, "The main objectives of this period were to train people so that they might be easy to govern, provide the needed clerks in Government departments and mercantile houses. . . ."⁹ This condition is further confirmed by Lugard who writes: The chief function of Government primary and secondary schools among primitive communities is to train the more promising boys from village schools as teachers for those schools, as clerks for the local native courts, and interpreters."¹⁰

The alienation of the African from his culture is quite clear in that his needs were not put into consideration. He was trained for easy governance as interpreter and slave to work in the colonial masters' farms and plantations. The educational system at the time was essentially opposed to his immediate and long-term needs. As such Obi says that for a long time the school system in Nigeria reflected foreign thinking and culture in its entirety until the attainment of Independence when Education began to reflect the aspirations and the manner and tempo of thinking of the people.¹¹

The Philosophical Approach To Nigerian Problems

The search for a solution to the problems of Nigeria is essentially a search for the true Nigerian personality. When the Government has

properly understood the characteristics of the people, the policies will become better adapted to their needs. Montesquieu made no mistake in asserting that all governments seek preservation generally, though they also have their specific goals. The Spartans were more interested in training warriors,¹² the Athenians needed wise-men and the Romans needed immediate and practical solutions to their problems.

The question is, what is the goal of the Nigerian Government? If the goal is known, then solutions can be proffered on how to get at the goal. Nigeria needs a philosophy which can best satisfy the goals aimed at. We must learn from the West to adopt the rational and critical approach to life and society in general. In this regard, "the tribe," "the clan," or the extended family is the point of reference in matters relating to morality and custom generally. These are effective units of interaction.

A philosophy which can provide solutions to our problems must improve on our cultural heritage through national consciousness and a more universal outlook on the activities of man so as to make an impact on the progress of Nigerians. This philosophy seeks to make the individual fit into the society and carry out his functions positively and constructively. Its greatest value for the growth of Nigeria is that it is vocationally oriented and de-emphasises the paper qualification mania which is a hangover of Colonial Education. Fafunwa describes how this realisation of a truly African approach to human problems was discouraged when he writes:

Conservatism, scholasticism, romanticism and a colonial outlook joined forces to frustrate the curriculum from the time Ibadan opened its doors in 1948 until the early 1960's. . . It was hoped that the newer Universities would be uniquely African.

The African nature of our philosophical approach is to be developed from the Education Curriculum. The curriculum should be made relevant in the actual situation of the child. In understanding his society and environment, the child adapts more easily to the exigencies of life and is better disposed to contribute to the rapid development of his/her society.

Aware of this exigency, the Federal Republic of Nigeria Policy on Education was issued in 1977. Our philosophy of Growth and Stability should develop from the objectives of that policy, which are:

1. The building of a free and democratic society.
2. The building of a just and egalitarian society.
3. The building of a united, strong and self reliant nation.
4. The building of a great and dynamic economy.
5. The building of a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

In the pursuance of these goals, the 6, 3, 3, 4, system of Education which has been introduced has as objective, the building of a united, strong and self reliant nation. A historical study of the tribes in Nigeria shows that they are very much related. A historical approach and a study of the various cultural characteristics will solve the problem of disunity. It will foster the will for unity and facilitate its attainment. A nation is regarded as strong when it is mentally, physically and financially powerful. This status can never be attained in Nigeria until our talents have been developed to technological excellence through true National Unity.

A great and dynamic economy can follow a solid technological base. Programmes like MAMSER and WAI should be made more realistic to the people on the basis of practical traditional norms of the people. The ideology must be one with which the people are familiar. The mixture of capitalist and socialist systems is not very good in the Nigerian situation, as we propagate privatisation and pay lip service to social mobilisation. It is recommended that collective efforts be made for the growth of both the individual and the society. Such concerted efforts at the Junior and Senior Secondary Schools are to be geared towards technological and scientific achievements. In this manner, we can build a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens.

The Socialist Solution to Nigerian Problems

Capitalist and socialist systems have been uppermost in the minds of Nigerians and both systems are operative in our society. While the former encourages individual initiative and class distinction, the latter brings about collective ownership of the means of production and the participation of all citizens in the essential decision-making processes. This latter appears more suitable and similar to the African setting. The reason is that "One of the bases on which the African mode of life rests is 'participation' or the profound communion with the universe . . . The African's main project is to live a life in harmony with humanity and with nature. . . For him the first evil is disintegration."

all the members of a society grow with the consciousness of living harmoniously with the other members of society and all the existent beings on earth, we should expect peace, progress and economico-political stability. The belief in reincarnation depicts the dead as not totally devoid of life as they continue to influence the moral life of their surviving members. In its most sublime form, it gives the assurance that the clan or family is extended in the children and among those yet unborn.

This belief recalls their unity in God or that force through which they originated. This unity goes beyond the clan and tribe to the whole of reality. Hence Matchett says:...

There is a power outside ourselves, a life-force which is the primal creative power of the universe. In most cases man is cut

off from this power immediately he is born until he discovers. . . how to make the contact anew.

The tendency to share in African society is an indication that this creative power is active in their lives. Its roots are found in the pre-colonial family, in the classless society. However, it has been dampened by colonisation with its individualistic concept of life. It is proper that we return to the true Nigerian concept of life which places the individual in his rightful place as a member of society who requires the approval of the latter for survival. When he does what is wrong and abhorred by others, he is regarded as an outcast. This is as a result of the holist, socialist and communist tendencies in African philosophy for reason of which Leopold Senghor is quoted to have remarked that "Negro African society is collectivist or, more exactly communal. We had already achieved socialism before the coming of the European."

In Nigeria, this attitude or behaviour is exemplified in members of a society coming to build a house for a person. On his part, the beneficiary simply prepares food and palm-wine for the people to eat and drink. Their feasts are celebrated in common and the community roads are cleared by communal effort. In order to avert the individual tendencies, which emphasize progress of self, we need a radical return to our pre-colonial communal life.

Realising the urgency and importance of this communal aspect of life, the first Pan-African Congress demanded improvement in the conditions of the Africans. At the Pan-African Conference in 1945, more African leaders joined L.S. Senghor in accepting a unique African socialism that would stress social, economic and cultural development, societal development, societal integration and continental independence.¹³ This system was embraced by Africans because they see African Socialism as a tool for achieving greater progress and unity. It would also enlist the masses for needed roles. It also serves well for the transformation from a traditional society into a modern national society, free of severe tribal and class differentiations.¹⁴ In an article entitled "*Ujamaa*—the Basis of African Socialism", Nyerere wrote about "traditional African society" in the singular. "The extended family was the basis of African Socialism," he argued.¹⁵

On the African aspects of *Ujamaa*, he says that the basic principles were living in mutual respect, sharing of joint production and a universal obligation to work.¹⁶ Though these views have been adversely criticised by some anthropologists, Nyerere holds strongly to his views with conviction and they have worked to some extent.

African socialism which is primarily an ideology of political independence and economic progress, civil freedom and equality, has reached a recognisable height in Tanzania. The Arusha Declaration of February, 1967 sets as its goal the struggle against poverty, hunger and exploitation through socialist principles. Limits were placed to the rights of the bour-

geoisie and officers who grew rich through the abuse of office or authority were removed.²⁵ In Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta also attributes a socialist character to traditional African society. "A document explaining socialism in Kenya states that the regime must be: (1) rooted in the best African traditions; (2) able to adapt to new and rapidly changing circumstances; (3) non-dependent on any other state or group of states. Among the positive African traditions, the document lists political democracy, equality and mutual responsibility".²⁶

Nyerere could adopt the socialist approach because he "often placed principles before interests, ideals before power, broader interests before narrow ones."²⁷ Leopold Senghor is another charismatic African leader who had an inclination towards socialism as well as Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia "who was a social welfare officer and had spent most of his life working for the freedom of his people."

Our determination to implement socialist goals is in conformity to our cultural demands in which there is the natural obligation to help the needy and co-operate in communal endeavours. It agrees with our philosophy of life.

A Philosophy For Integral Development

Philosophy as love of Wisdom broadens the mind and vision of man in relation to the world and its problems. To grapple with these problems, man becomes biased and develops the wrong attitude of either stealing to survive or committing suicide in order to escape from the difficulties of life. These are pessimistic approaches which do not befit our human nature. Philosophy can help us to develop a mental attitude which surpasses these problems and overcomes them. Hence Russell says "The man who has no tincture of philosophy goes through life imprisoned in the prejudice derived from common sense, from the habitual belief of his age or his nation, and from convictions which have grown up in his mind without the co-operation or consent of his deliberate reason."²⁸ Without an integral and complete development of our faculties, the Third Republic which we are expecting in 1992 will be a complete failure. Except Nigerians begin now to plan for mental, spiritual and technological growth, this country will become a shameful place for all. Has it ever dawned on us that all the drunkenness, theft, adultery, kick-backs and all other acts of corruption will be paid for? A man reaps what he sows. We may not remain deceived forever. A philosophy for integral development does not judge from appearance or sensitive knowledge. It rather reflects conscientiously on the totality of life and takes a definite stand. It saves us from ignorance and prejudice. It is in this regard that Ogunbowale writes: "... the function of philosophy is to liberate the mind, mould the man, shape his value orientation, so as to be able to establish his power."²⁹

When the mind has been liberated from fear and ignorance which arise from prejudice, we are better equipped to operate successfully

and joyfully. As the latin expression goes: "*Fundamentum omnis cultus, animae cultus est*" (the foundation of all development is the development of the mind). The liberation of the mind begins when we have become conscious of our present predicaments. As Eboh observes: This awareness of our ugly situation will lead to mental re-orientation; re-evaluation of our value system and the emergence of the spirit of initiative and nationalism."³⁰ This posture seeks to eradicate all negative views that are associated with us even as we live our lives. It is one which seeks the true liberation of man (body, soul and mind) from inordinate passions. To this type of philosophy, hypocrisy, corruption and tribalism are foreign. It is only an all embracing philosophy which can save us from fear and launch us into an era of intellectual and technological achievements in the Third Republic. It is only in this manner that Nigeria can develop progressively and command the desired respect among the Nations of the world.

That these goals may be realised, the General Assembly of The Christian Council of Nigeria in 1970 requested the Federal Government to draw up a code of social conduct to be enforced by immediate and positive action without which the objectives of the Development Plan cannot be achieved, that is, a just and egalitarian society.³¹ With regard to the ethnic problem, the Council observed: "Believing that what Nigeria needs now more than anything else is the welding together of all its many ethnic groupings, cultures, standards and languages, things that will make for national unity. . . and the working out of a national purpose, the Church, through its teaching ministry, should work towards this supreme objective."³²

The 1979 Constitution of The Federal Republic of Nigeria is quite liberal in enunciating the Fundamental Rights of man but the implementation is a problem. A look at number 39 of chapter IV of the Constitution shows that a lot more needs to be done about the ethnic problem. It is a well-known fact that the southerners are being discriminated against in the North. If as against their northern counterparts, they are employed on contract basis, where is their "Right to freedom from discrimination"? Moreover, there have been serious debates about the new Capital City, Abuja turning into a Northern town with religious emblem at the entrance, while public conveniences and bus stops depict the dome shape of mosques.³³ The ethnic undertone has cost this Country a great deal through religious and political crises. One only prays that there be quick resolution of these issues before the inception of the Third Republic, otherwise the stability we are expecting will remain an illusion.

But these are mere quibble, attempts to avoid the answer to unity and progress in Africa, all according to the wishes of the colonialists who succeeded in separating the Nigerians into small groups of tribes in accordance with their "divide and rule system". In the words of Nnoli: "Today, however, every single language group in Africa is referred

to as a tribe regardless of the nature of its social development."³⁴ On his part, Mamdani asks: "What is it that makes 2 million Norwegians a people and just as many Baganda a tribe? A few hundred thousand Icelanders a people and 14 million Hausa-Fulani a tribe? There is only one explanation: racism."³⁵ In order to further strengthen their strategies, the colonial masters separated these linguistic groups from one another, especially in residential areas.³⁶ In Northern Nigeria, the Hausa-Fulani were separated from the Southerners. They had previously lived together and harmoniously so before the forced separation.³⁷ If we were made to live apart by the colonialists, we should not allow it to continue today.

Sincere efforts must be made towards our unification through mutual help and understanding. African socialism abhors discrimination and ruthlessness. Our integral philosophy would have been a huge success if through it many can come to find their centres and come to lead more meaningful and fruitful life. Let us, therefore watch closely the events of life and behave cautiously in their presence, as through these we discover our true selves.

Emergence from our closed selves will open out to us the blessings of objective and true living. We shall then be able to listen to each other in a dialogue for the unity of all Nigerians in particular and Africa or the world in general.

Conclusion

This has been a brief survey of a practical philosophy for the integral growth of our country, Nigeria. It is acknowledged in this paper that the parliamentary and presidential systems have failed us since Independence in 1960. The military system has not proved better than these. The cause of their failure is mainly that they are foreign systems. The colonialist education systems were foreign to us as well. As a result, we were alienated from our culture. However, it has been accepted in this submission that the African puts more stress on the solidarity of the group and on the communion of the members than on the autonomy and the contributions and needs of the individual.³⁸ This results in what has been qualified as social equilibrium for reality is all embracing and natural phenomena participates in reality.

In pursuit of the 1977 Nigerian Education Policy, it is recommended that the curriculum be made relevant to our situation, especially in the proper up-bringing of the child. The perennial problem of corruption should be overcome by every Nigerian. The leaders are to blame most for the failure of the populace to be fair and just in their activities, for "unwillingness or inability of the leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example"³⁹ has cost us a great deal. They should realise that history will pass terrible judgment on them.

We have eventually opted for an African Socialism because of its desire to share and take collective responsibility. Moreover, it is more attuned to our family and traditional set ups. The pre-colonial family was classless and African socialism seeks to eradicate individualism and class distinction.

African Socialism has also been opted for because it has the inherent quality to eradicate ethnicity by recalling our past relations in the Sudanic territory before dispersion. African Socialism would be an integrative philosophical approach to the problems of Nigeria in the Third Republic, without which we shall only continue to pay lip service to programme like Ethical Revolution, WAI, MAMSER and SAP.

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MILITARY GOVERNMENTS AND ASSAULTS ON NIGERIA'S SECULARITY

O. B. C. NWOLISE

Introduction

(a) Background

Nigeria today is a nation in crisis. Apart from the problems of political instability, depressed economy with the attendant widespread hunger and hardship, there is the mounting tension produced more by religious manipulations than by religious intolerance. Nigeria like many other nations of the world is a country with a multiplicity of religions with the outstanding ones being Christianity, Islam, and the African Traditional religion, which have all been in conflict especially since the Organization of Islamic Conference controversy of 1986.

In the United States of America, the Supreme Court overruled in June 1985, a statute of the state of Alabama which authorised public schools there "to observe a one-minute silence for meditation or voluntary prayer". The supreme Court of the United States gave as reasoning behind the decision the point that the statute of Alabama State represented an establishment of religion which action violated the First Amendment to the United States Constitution stating that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"¹. Again Turkey in December 1984 jailed 23 members of some religious sects for violating the country's law on proselytizing because of their door to door preaching and pamphleteering.²

Many Nigerians will wonder at the two actions taken in the USA and Turkey. They will ask how a minute's silence in a classroom of noisy students will endanger the religious liberty of American people. Nigerians who are used to the door-to-door preaching of Jehovah's Witnesses men and women, the blaring of loudspeakers mounted on roof-tops calling Muslim faithful, and daily religious preachings in public buses and taxis will think the government leaders in Turkey are mad for jailing door-to-door pamphleteers.

However the point must be made, that the United States of America and Turkey are secular states and it is the duty of the governments to religiously maintain, and promote that secular status, and also protect the religious liberties of the citizens. Such effective maintenance and promotion of the secularity of the nation and protection of the religious liberties of the citizens have not existed in Nigeria partly because governments, especially military governments as this study shows have been party to the assaults on Nigeria's secularity.