

THE PHILOSOPHER AND SOCIAL CHANGE AT A TIME LIKE THIS IN NIGERIA

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Introduction

When I received this invitation with the freedom to make my choice on the topic of presentation from the central theme of this conference, two things came to my mind: first that this department epitomises liberty in giving me the *libertas filosofandi* (liberty to philosophise) - a very essential ingredient for effective social engineering. Then, the main issue; how do I engage philosophy or philosophers with social change in Nigeria? After some reflections, I settled with “the Philosopher and Social Change at a time like this in Nigeria” since, I believe that there should be one who carries philosophy as an activity before it can be actuated for social change. Of course, there is no doubt that Nigeria is mired in a deep challenge of what I have decided to call the “social change question in Nigeria”. As a nation in counter-developmental movement, philosophers ought to take the gauntlet in order to create a compass for the navigation of positive social change as have been done by philosophers of other climes. Hegel would aver that every philosopher should be a child of his own philosophical milieu; the implication of which is that all philosophers in Nigeria should start to philosophise on the “Nigerian question.” Nigeria is badly shaped

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in all its ramifications - be it in governance, rule of law, security, electioneering, education; name them!

Given the above, one very important step is to jettison the victimhood question where most Nigerians play the blame game of heaping everything on colonialism and neo-colonialism. There is no doubt that imperialism had and still has dangerous over lay on the African condition but our challenge is to think our way out; thus, like one who is drowning in a deep sea we should muster the highest survival strategy and competence in order to come out of it alive or we perish. Following from the above assertion, we should thinker on the development of a culture of philosophy that can socially engineer us out of the quagmire we have found ourselves as a nation. I have this culture of philosophy in afro-constructivism - a reconstructive attempt at re-creating our society given the existential realities of our time.

Our contention in this paper is that there must be a new culture of philosophy that will help us out of the “Nigerian social change question” and that this as I have said is found in afro-constructivism- a developmental philosophy that is capable of enthroning a rational society in Nigeria. In order to do justice to the demands of the paper, I have structured my work in sub-sections as follows: conceptualising philosophy, a diachronic analysis of social change, philosophy and social change: any nexus? Philosophy and social change at a time like this in Nigeria and I concluded. So let's start by conceptualising philosophy in a gathering of philosophers to see if there are any justifications for doing so.

Conceptualising Philosophy

Perhaps it will be apposite to start by attempting an understanding

of the meaning of philosophy if any. Philosophy, mankind's greatest intellectual achievement has kept for itself the arduous task of finding real meanings for human existence. It has over the years tried to give meaningful interpretation to the difficult issues of existence. One may wonder why this exercise may begin with defining philosophy especially in the gathering of philosophers. This, results from the difficulty faced with various imputations of meanings to the philosophical enterprise if one examines the history of philosophy. Again, there is no doubt that there is no univocality amongst philosophers vis-à-vis the meaning of philosophy. This lack of agreement may provide a justificatory ground for conceptualising philosophy by any philosopher who involves himself in any enterprise as this in order to betray his intellectual leaning. A further justification may arise in the sense of the often-paraded view that the meaning of philosophy is on its own a subject of philosophical debate. This is why the notion of meta-philosophy is taking sway, nowadays.

However, if one takes the issue of the difficulty in obtaining a univocal conception of meaning of philosophy too far, it might portray philosophy as a worthless venture. It may also be whimsical to behave like Sidney Hook- an American philosopher who shied away from attempting a definition of philosophy before his students by taking them to the library to point at the books to declare that if one reads the tome of books therein in the library, and then such a one is doing philosophy. He thus, emphasised on doing philosophy instead of defining philosophy. Thus, philosophy can be defined by examining the sort of activities that philosophers engage in over the years and across cultures. C.D Broad's perception of philosophy brings out this notion when he avers that:

If...we want to decide what philosophy is, we

shall naturally begin by considering what kind of activities have been pursued by men whom everyone would regard as great philosophers when engaged in what everyone would regard as their characteristically professional work.²

What is of prominent relief from the above view is that philosophy could be defined historically by analysing what philosophers have been doing over the years and across various cultures. However, this amounts to shifting the meaning of philosophy to universality. What we are looking for is definiteness to the kind of intellectual activities that could be regarded as philosophy.

Olusegun Oladipo gives us an insight into this sort of intellectual exercise. Thus, we could provide the theoretical frame works for perceiving, feeling and transforming reality whether socio-political, religio-cultural etc. This means that the philosopher searches for the touchstone that ought to guide life. According to him:

Two things are required of a genuine philosopher in this view. These are insight and commitment to human well-being. In other words, and in this view, the philosopher is expected to promote a better understanding of the human conditions, as a means of enhancing the human capacity to cope with the challenges of life.³

². C.O. Broad, "Two Lectures on the Nature of Philosophy" in H. O. Lewis (ed) *Clarity is not Enough: Essays in Criticism of Linguistic Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 2nd Impression 1969) Pg. 59.

³. Olusegun Oladipo, "On Philosophy" in Temisan Ebijuwá (ed) *Philosophy and Social Change* (Ibadan: Hope Publication 2007), Pg. 14.

Accordingly, the other role of philosophy for Oladipo is the critical engagement of the intellectual prowess of philosophers. This presents philosophy as a critical and presuppositionless exercise geared towards the re-definition of man himself and his conditions. This is a continuous process; in the words of Whitehead, a process reality. The core of this activity is to ground man's understanding of himself and offer continuous description of him with the aim of improved and increased adaptability to this world. This role of philosophy is vividly captured by Kwasi Wiredu when he asserts that “the function of philosophy everywhere is to examine the intellectual foundation of life, using the best available modes of knowledge and reflection of human well-being”.⁴

At this stage, it is of importance to note that this critical engagement of philosophy embraces all aspects of man's existential experience on earth. But suffice it to say that these two roles of philosophy are what we intend to use in exploring the possibility of social change at times like this in Nigeria. It will not go without noticing that though there are no consensus of meaning to philosophy, the above two roles of philosophy forms the fulcrum of the activities of philosophers. Thus, philosophers engage themselves in the conscious and tendeciously predilected roles of applying critical, creative and reflective thinking to all the aspects of man's existential experience. Philosophy is nevertheless not only critical but also reconstructive and this is one of its greatest roles. This is because in reconstructing man's experience, it prods man to be fully human – to think out solutions to man's most basic problems of existence as individuals and as social collectives. We shall later come to how we can apply these time-tested functions of philosophy in Nigeria but

⁴. Kwasi Wiredu, *Philosophy and An African Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1980) Pg. 62.

let us now examine social change.

A Diachronic Analysis of Social Change

Like every social concept, social change is impervious to univocality of meaning. But we may start by looking at social change as referring to significant transformations or evolutions in the way societies are formed, structured, organised, and the human interactions therein. It involves adjustments, adaptations or modifications in social institutions, social behaviors, social values, and socio-cultural symbolisms, often with long-term consequences. Fundamentally, it may revolve around how societies evolve and adapt over time to the forces of change as social forces blossom. Simply put, social change can be viewed as the adaptation or modification of the social order of human society in social values, social institutions, social behavior, social relation etc.

The following may form the basic elements of social change:

Modifications in Societal Values and Belief Systems:

Social change is usually driven by spontaneous shifts in the societal values, cultural symbols, and the overall worldview of such a society. An overtly materialist cum capitalist society would continue to evolve or adapt to murderous competitive profit maximisation trajectory.

Adaptations and Transformations in the Social Order:

Social change affects how societies are formed and may encompass evolutions of the fundamental social structures as institutions like the family, religious institutions, educational institutions, political institutions, cultural settings and economic systems.

Modifications in Behaviors and Norms of Any Society:

Social change involves the adaptive evolution on how people behave; interact with one another, and the norms that govern these interactions. The human societies now can espouse few examples of social change as the shifts in the political values, rise of industrialisation, evolution of the understanding of religious principles, the digital revolutions as ICT, changes in gender roles, and family structures, etc.

Social change could be triggered by a lot of factors but not limited to shifts in values, technological evolutions, forces of globalism like contacts with other societies, population explosion with its attendant adjustment challenges, ideological and environmental changes etc.

At this stage, one may be wont to ask if social changes are always planned. Obviously, it would be stated that while some social changes are intentional, others occur as unplanned consequences of various actions and events. For example, in Nigeria the deliberate wickedness of those in government and police hierarchy engendered the resistance to the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) by the Nigerian youths thereby leading to the scrapping of that police group. There is no doubt that the impacts of social change can never be over emphasised. This is because it can have profound and long-lasting effects on society, positively or negatively. The essence of this is that social change is a dynamic, evolutionary and ongoing process that modifies the very fabrics and foundations of human societies. We have to state that the type of social change that we are advocating here is the planned one; thus, evolving the sort of change that is desirable.

Why Should We Care about Social Change?

Social change as the various ways human interactions and relationships transform cultural and social institutional order over a period of time have profound impacts on society and therefore should attract human attention if any society must advance. This is because the universal human potential for social change has innate biological basis and therefore can never be ignored. This has its root in the flexibility and adaptability of the human species—the belief that there are biologically fixated patterns on the one hand and the enormous capacity and potential for learning, symbolising, and creating on the other hand summed in the nature-nurture debate. The human constitution makes possible changes that are both biologically and not biologically (that is to say, genetically) determined. Social change, in other words, is possible only by virtue of biological characteristics of the human species, but the nature of the actual changes cannot be reduced to these species traits.⁵

It was Heraclitus who posited that change is the only constant in the world; though this is debatable as there are elements that are not susceptible to change in reality; yet the notion of change should be of dire interest for us humans to appreciate if we must develop in earnest. Social change is thus a concept many of us take for granted or don't really even understand. No society has ever remained the same nor can ever remain the same over time since change is always happening. We accept change as inevitable, and fixatedly so; right? Well, not exactly so since the understanding of the blend of the

⁵. J. Chidozie Chukwuokolo, "Evaluating the Philosophical Foundations of Development Theories" in *Open Journal of Philosophy* (OJPP) (A Publication of American Scientific Research Project) Volume 2, No. 4 Published online in November 2012 in SciRes (<http://www.SciRes.org/journal/ojpp>).

elements of change and permanence can help us in our developmental trajectory as humans.

Philosophers define social change as changes in human interactions in evolving relationships that transform socio-cultural institutions. These changes occur over time and often have profound and long-term consequences for society. Well known examples of such changes have resulted from social movements in workers' rights as the civil rights, women's rights advocacy, resistance to long term military rule in Nigeria etc; we should take social changes very seriously. Relationships have changed, institutions have changed, and cultural norms have changed as a result of these social change movements. What interests me, and should interests you, is our collective power to influence social change. This should trigger our collective or any society's definition of the purpose for social change. What then is the main purpose of social change?

What is the Main Purpose of Social Change?

While we accept that change is constant, we do not have to accept that we are powerless in effecting it. It is to the extent that we care about the trajectory of social change that we can try to shape it and help to create the kind of change we wish to see in our society. The question now is what kind of change do we wish to see in the world especially in Nigeria?

We should note that one person's idea about what is good or positive social change might be some other person's idea of bad or negative social change. For example, in Nigeria, there are those who believe that they have the right to occupy other people's land, graze their farms to their livestock and kill any indigenous land owner who tries to resist them. This category of people, fight fervently for that

so called “right;” and believe wholeheartedly that it is within their natural rights to do so. As we have witnessed in our country, this has led to the funny idea of valuing livestock more than the land owners. On their own the indigenous land owners believe firmly in the righteousness of their cause, too, and have resolved to resist all attempts at taking over their lands in whatever guise, be it Ruga, cattle ranching etc. The above value differences have caused unprecedented tensions in Nigeria.⁶

There is no doubt that the differing perceptions in the articulation or understanding of the aims of social change has resulted in the alteration of cultural, political norms, institutional and personal relationships of societies. Therefore, whether we all agree or not, the only way to effect social change is to form an activist movement that is powered by active citizenry working together to make change. As a philosopher of development, I always reflect on the issue of what sort of change I want to see in Nigeria as I engage my students across cultures in order to foster constructive change in our university community, our nation and the world at large.

Some people usually, care and understand that humans can influence social change for the better. This understanding of social change varies in different ways. Some may do it through discussion among people of diverse opinions and backgrounds. While others may do it by offering innovative educational orientations in schools, refugee or IDP camps etc and to bring together social activists in order to bring the desired change as this one that we are

⁶. See Alloy Ihuah (eds.) *Pastoralists and Farmers Conflicts in Central Nigeria, Learning from the Pasts*. (Markurdi: Centre for Research Management, Benue State University) for more detailed discussions on Herders terrorism on Farmers in Nigeria.

gathered here for. We should care about social change because it is our responsibilities to change the world we live in. Change Begins with how and when we interact with others by building relationships to foster constructive social order. If we form the attitude of tolerance to the other's values that are constructive, we would be on the trajectory of the dialogic relationship that will propel the kind of social change that we desire in the world. At this stage of our work, what is rightful is to engage ourselves with the nexus between philosophy and social change.

Philosophy and Social Change: Any Nexus?

Social change as a structural transformation of cultural, political, socio-economic systems and institutions aiming at the creation of a more equitable, fair and just society is a universal phenomenon that usually occurs in every society. On its own, the very nature of philosophy as a universal phenomenon that seeks for criticality on the entirety of reality implies that it is also ultimately a social reality. Philosophically therefore, social development necessarily situates itself within the purview of the nature and meaning of philosophy. We can now espouse how philosophy helps in articulating the meaning of and the condition for social development. In effect, philosophy foundates the ideological underpinning of social change.

The point at issue now is what are those issues that plague the philosophical mind in formulating social change and ipso facto development theories? Can there be any justifications in philosophy studying development theories and social change? It is obvious that philosophy has certain approaches that are *sui generis* into the investigation of any subject matter; social change inclusive. In other therefore to appreciate the formulation of the goals, objectivity and

universality of social change that enhances development, certain considerations have to be made. What are those things that inform the formulation of social development goals and objectives? Theories of society cum social change (whether good or bad) have implicit in them theories of human nature. In order to appreciate such theories, there is the need to evaluate the conceptions of human nature that undergird them. This can be appreciated better if we assert that philosophers of various epochs and ideological leanings seem to attest to the view above. For instance, Leslie Stevenson avers that: “The meaning and purpose of human life, what we ought to do and what we can hope to achieve—all these are fundamentally affected by whatever we think is the real or true nature of man.”⁷

Amerigo Lapati accepts the same view when he asserts that, “Basic to the study and understanding of any theory that deals with human behaviour is the concept of the nature of man underlying that philosophy or theory.”⁸ Be these as they may, human nature is a product of biological, social, physical – chemical, psychological and religious elements that engender the uniqueness of human being. Social development theories hinging on human nature therefore are predicated on certain metaphysical and epistemological commitments.

Two fundamental metaphysical commitments arise—one passive and the other autonomous. The passive one entails a mechanical deterministic orientation that subjects man to the iron clad laws of nature namely environment and genetic inheritance. On this

^{7.} Leslie Stevensons, *Seven Theories of Human Nature* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1974), Pg. 3.

^{8.} Amerigo Lapati, “Skinner and the Nature of Man” in *The New Scholasticism* XXXXVII (1973), Pp. 501 – 502.

construal, the cosmos is governed by a web of natural laws; humans are part of this cosmos and ipso facto they are subject to these laws. Thus, man in this instance cannot be manipulable, investigable and predictable. Martin Hollis calls this typology of man “plastic man,” as against “the autonomous man.”⁹ The autonomous man is that, that gives freedom to man in such a way that he can change an order that is inimical to his wellbeing. This implies that there is no absolute wholly other that is incomprehensible to humans yet controls human affairs. Humans on their own are not reducible to any essence that cannot be investigated scientifically such as the self. Thus every “essence” of man is investigable, manipulable and predictable. In effect, the autonomous conception of man is that, that confers on man elements of freedom, responsibility and choice. Freedom predisposes that any attempt to study man entirely as a law-governed being results in a ruse. All that can be done is to elicit justifications from acting agents as to why they act the way they do. Humans on this construal are free and rational to certain respect if not entirely. There is an essence which crystallises in a unique self that makes choice from alternatives in any circumstance. Thus seen, autonomous conception places man the “rational subject self” on responsibility for his actions in contrast to the plastic man whom if we stretch things very well is absolvable from responsibility for his actions.¹⁰

What is on prominent relief here is that philosophy significantly influences social change in many ways not limited by providing the critical frameworks and ethical considerations needed for the agent

⁹. Martin Hollis, *Models of Man* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1977), Pg. 5.

¹⁰. J Chidozie Chukwuokolo, *Reason in Development: Towards a Rationalist Theory of Development*, (Germany, Saarbrücken, Deutschland: LAP Publishers 2016), Pg. 63.

to analyse, challenge, and reshape societal structures, values and norms. Its agential role catalyses the foundation for progress or retrogression by questioning existing beliefs, advocating for justice and equity, and guiding the development of new social and political systems.

The following might form few basic nexus between philosophy and social change: Philosophy transforms the philosopher to encourage critical thinking on established norms and values, prompting agents in societies to question the status quo ante. John Locke, Martin Luther King Jr., Karl Mark, Nnamdi Azikiwe etc were few examples of philosophers who radically challenged the existing orders of their time. By examining the underlying assumptions and power structures within their societies, these philosophers exposed the prevailing injustices, inequities and inequalities that plagued their societies that might have otherwise been overlooked. Philosophical method and inquiry which is *sui generis* can lead to the identification of social problems and the creation of alternative solutions, paving the way for the desired social change in any society.

Again, the agential integrity of philosophers may also provide the ethical frameworks necessary for the desired social change in any society. This is done by providing the ethical frameworks for the evaluation of norms, social practices, policies, social structures and institutions. They provide conceptual elucidation and grip for such terms as justice, fairness, equality, human rights etc, in order to provide the basis for the assessment of the moral implications for the acceptance of any social change. This level of engagement with ethical dilemmas arising in social evolution or change, has led philosophy to help in the shaping of societies by creating more just

and equitable social structures. The Industrial Revolution in Europe and the eradication of colonialism in Africa are few instances resulting from the above.

Philosophical agents have helped in driving social movements in world history. There is no doubt that philosophical ideas as those of GWF Hegel's inspired and guided social movements seeking to challenge oppression and injustice. Some other times, enthrone oppression as the use in which Adolf Hitler made of Hegel's theory of eugenicism. Philosophers developed such time-tested concepts as freedom, equality, and human dignity. Philosophy can and has empowered individuals and groups to organise and advocate for social change devoid of oppression in human societies; such movements as the civil rights, women's rights, animal rights and other social justice initiatives were products of this sort of agential advocacies of philosophy. Thus, it provides vocabularies, deeper understanding and framework for the appreciation of social problems.

Philosophical orientations have helped in guiding social policies by providing philosophical insights for the development of social policies that are more just, equitable, and effective in addressing social problems, thus leading to the desired social change of any society. What is obvious is that by examining the ethical implications of different policy options, philosophy may motivate policymakers in making more informed decisions that promote the well-being of all members of society. All we are trying to establish in this subsection is essentially the responsibilities of philosophy to social change. In essence, we aver that it provides the intellectual tools and ethical compass needed to navigate the complexities of social change, fostering a more just, equitable, and humane social

order. I have tried to lay the foundation on which I can discuss philosophy and social change at times like this in Nigeria.

Philosophy and Social Change at a Time like this in Nigeria

Nigeria is in a dire need for positive social change and I dare say that philosophers should take the lead in providing the foundations necessary for the sort of social change that we need. As a discipline that trains its adherents to seek for ultimate solutions to existing problems, it will be germane at this point to start by unearthing the ultimate cause(s) of the social change question in Nigeria. Perhaps, it will be ideal to start from the root; I dare say that the reckless manner in which the British lumped together peoples with diverse and apparently irreconcilable values into a single nation-state without their inputs is at the root of this problem. Examining this, let us start from how Nigeria began as a nation. Hear Lord L. V. Harcourt;

We have released Northern Nigeria from the leading strings of the treasury. The promising and well conducted Youth is now on allowance on his own and is about to affect an alliance with a Southern lady of means. I have issued the special license and Sir Fredrick Lugard will perform the ceremony, may the union be fruitful and the couple content.¹¹

A critical analysis of the above quotation raises the following issues:

1. There is a betrayal of the fact that the union was *ab initio*

¹¹. Lagos: February 1-22, 1919. A Lagos Newspaper of Colonial Nigeria, written under the headline, "The Retirement of Sir Fredrick Lugard". See "Document VI" in A.R.M. Kirk- Green, *The Amalgamation of Nigeria* (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1968).

never meant to succeed otherwise why would there be skepticism on the survival of the union?

2. At the period, Islam regarded and still regards women as chattels and objects of leisure for their husbands, why did Lord Harcourt regard Southern Nigeria as a Lady of means and Northern Nigeria as a leading string of the treasury if there were no inherent injustice and intension of making the North to lord over the South in all ramifications? This means that a lousy husband (who was forced on her wife) should stay and deal with the treasury thus making the lady of means a beast of burden.
3. What empowered Britain morally to issue this special marriage license if it were not conquest and sheer brute force? But Britain also lays moral claim to the ownership of Nigeria to the fact that they paid eight hundred and sixty-five thousand pounds sterling to Tuleman Goldie's Royal Niger Company in order to purchase the country 1899. This is why people like us regard Nigeria as a company or investment of the British government, a sort of profit-oriented enterprise where they place the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)-President- of their choice. There are more challenges raised by the feeling of Lord Harcourt above yet the three above suffice for our aim.

Lord Fredrick Lugard was even magisterial in his amalgamation declarations thus:

His Majesty, the King has decided that from today all the countries from the sea to near the desert in the north and from the French country in the West to German Kameroons, in the East shall be one single country under one Governor General so that there may be no jealousy or

rivalry between the north and the south, all may cooperate together for the advancement of peace and posterity...it would be my earnest endeavour to promote peace and justice for all men, to protect every man in the observance of his own religious faith and to administer equal justice alike for great and small... I trust that as one united country, Nigeria would increase in prosperity and wealth and its people in happiness.¹²

Some issues are of prominent relief here; first, that His Majesty appeared to have regarded the amalgamated people without respect to the extent that their feelings were not countenanced with. Again, I doubt if any of the tribes who were amalgamated together were ever consulted. Certainly, this attitude was what triggered the level of resistance that *ndi Igbo* and some other tribes gave before they were subjugated with brute force. Unfortunately, when Lugard took over to perform the marriage ceremony, he personified hatred for the black people and used “divide-to-conquer” as his tool for the subjugation of the amalgamated nay conquered peoples of Nigeria. *The Lagos Weekly Record* of 1919 says this of him:

Obsessed by two manias, the segregation fad and the furor faciend sleges, for Fredrick by means of the one, consciously or unconsciously endeavoured to intensify, in the colony and the Southern provinces raced antipathies between the blacks and the whites which had never been suspected nor dreamt during the palmy days of old colony of Lagos---- Whilst by means of the other, a classified as bad and in different and are distinguished more for their repressiveness and

^{12.} A.M.T Kirk-Green, *The Amalgamation of Nigeria: A Documentary Record*, (London; Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1968), Pp. 27-28.

brutality, rather than for their juridical lure and enlightened statesmanship.... Sir Fredrick has also worn for Nigeria the unenviable distinction of being the greatest ordinance-ridden colony within the British Empire.¹³

The 'legacy' of the British divide-to-conquer was writ large in the ways and mannerisms of the misunderstanding of the meaning of Independence on the one hand and unity on the other hand. Thus, arising from Lugard's incontinence and the booby trap he laid in order to perpetually be in control of Nigeria's wealth, some of the Independence leaders of Nigeria never took cognizance of what independence and national unity really meant. While Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe on his Independence speech was calling on the duo of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Ahmadu Bello to ignore their tribal differences for a united Nigeria, they insisted that Nigerians were disparate peoples. To understand the depth of the root cause of the Nigerian question, it would be ideal to give some quotations from their past leaders.

The conference of the Northern Chiefs in 1942 had the following to say while responding to the call for the unity of Nigeria from the West African Students' Union (WASU); "Holding this country together is not possible, except by means of the religion of the prophet. If they want political unity, let them follow our religion".¹⁴ As if the above was not enough, the Sultan of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu

^{13.} *The Lagos Weekly Records (1919)* cited in J N Agbo, *Sinking Structures on Faulty Foundations*, (Abakaliki: Alpha Citizens' Advocate Press, 2021) Pg. 13.

^{14.} Obafemi Awolowo, *Paths to Nigerian Freedom*, (London: Faber and Faber 1947) Pg. 51. It should be noted that this was a response to the West African Students' Union (WASU) requesting for the Emirs' support for a constitutional evolution.

Bello expressed himself in the same manner thus; “These southerners who desire a united Nigeria should first embrace Islam as their religion.”¹⁵ Again, Sir Ahmadu Bello, in 1948 averred:

Since 1914, the British Government has been trying to make Nigeria into one Country, but the Nigerian people are themselves historically different in their background, in their religious beliefs and customs and do not show themselves any sign of willingness to unite. Nigerian unity is really a British intension for the country.¹⁶

For Sir Ahmadu Bello, the idea of a united Nigeria was understandable as a British wish and intension for Nigeria and *ipso facto* not tenable. On his own, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa stated that;

Many Nigerians deceive themselves by thinking that Nigeria is one, particularly the press people. This is wrong, I am sorry to say that this presence of unity is artificial and it ends outside this chamber. The southern tribes, who are now pouring into the north in ever increasing numbers, and more or less domiciled here do not mix with the northern people and we in the north look at them as invaders.¹⁷

There is no doubt that a leader whose understanding of his country in the above parlance can ever work for its unity and development; without a unity of purpose the desired social change will certainly be in the negative. Chief Obafemi Awolowo was blunter when he

^{15.} Cited in James Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, (London; University of California Press) Pg. 361.

^{16.} See James Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, Pg. 320.

^{17.} James Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, Pg. 361.

asserted that “Nigeria is not a nation; it is a mere geographical expression. There are no Nigerians in the sense as there are English, Welsh or French. The word “Nigeria” is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live in the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not”.¹⁸

What is decipherable from the above is the lack of a unity of purpose desirable for credible social change. In fact, Awo lived up to this view by vigorously developing Western Nigeria until his amaranthine voyage. These rancorous perceptions were used to view independence and these perceptions lived beyond Nigerian independence thus laying foundation for prebendalism in the political sphere of Nigeria. So, at the wake of the Independence of Nigeria, a new magisterial order was released by Sir Ahmadu Bello when he incautiously stated that:

The new nation called Nigeria should be the estate of our grandfather, Othman Danfodio. We must ruthlessly prevent a change of power. We must use the minority in the North as willing tools and South as conquered territories and never allow them to rule over us and never allow them to have control over their future.¹⁹

There is nothing more misunderstanding of the essence of Independence as these statements or perhaps, this audacity is derivable from the imperial support given to the Fulani by the British before, during and after Independence. This is supported by the fact that a year before the election that birthed the Nigerian Independence, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was being groomed as the Prime Minister. No wonder, barely three years after

^{18.} Awolowo, *Path to National Unity*, Pg.48

^{19.} Sir Ahmadu Bello, *The Parrot*, 12th October, 1960.

Independence, Nigeria was locked in a series of crises that snowballed into the genocide against *ndi Igbo* between 1967-1970. This was chronologically and succinctly captured in a recent Newspaper advertorial thus:

Barely three years after Independence when the *1963 Constitution* was enacted, the Tiv Riots and mass massacre of the Tiv people for attempting to regain control of their ancestral territory commenced. Following the brazen attempt to annex the entire Yoruba land to Northern Nigeria resulting in *Operation Wetie in Wild Wild West*, by which the former Western Region spiraled into uncontrollable anarchy and bloodshed because of federal troops and thugs let loose on the people. Therefore, it can be said in all fairness that even the *1963 Constitution* was naively too optimistic. It was conceived in our state of innocence, when we were ignorant of the capacity for deceit and manipulation that could be dexterously applied by a section of the country abusing political power at the Center to replace the British as internal colonial masters over others. It was upon this realisation that Chief Obafemi Awolowo was alleged to have plotted to overthrow that constitutional order, leading to his trial, conviction, and imprisonment for treason. The January 15th, 1966, military coup was to stop bloodshed in Yoruba land and the Middle Belt. That coup was maliciously and deceitfully dubbed *Igbo Coup* resulting in the ethnic cleansing of Eastern Nigerians from the Nigerian Armed Forces (particularly Ndigbo). These are clear evidence of mutual mistrust among the

different ethnic groups that the *1963 Constitution* had not foreseen....²⁰

Given the self-evident horrific facts above, including ongoing atrocities and attempted genocide by strategic application of terrorism to displace indigenous people in their ancestral lands in the Middle Belt, Hausa land, and almost every other corner of Nigeria -- a realistic constitution for Nigeria would be one which conclusively addresses the root causes of political instability and other threats to our national security and nationhood. The fact is that Nigeria today is a living hell, an endless horror movie for some ethnic groups, especially the Igbo, so much so that some ethnic groups are brazenly told that their lives are worth less than the cattle's. The indigenous peoples of the former Northern Region are crying out loud for their right to live peacefully in their ancestral homelands.²¹

Given the terrific circumstances that followed these crises, Colonel Yakubu Gowon declared: "Suffice it to say that putting all considerations to test- political, economic as well as social- the basis for unity is not there."²² A serious frustration as well arising from the blatant renegation from the Aburi Accord, led Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu to declared that:

Nigeria never was and can never be a united country. The very nature of Nigeria inevitably gave rise to political power groups, goaded by sectional rather than national interest. These

^{20.} Igbo Leaders of Thought Advertorial Vanguard, (August 13th 2025), Pg. 29.

^{21.} Igbo Leaders of Thought Advertorial Vanguard, (August 13th 2025), Pg. 29.

^{22.} Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon's Maiden Address of 1st August, 1967 aimed at pulling Northern Nigeria out of the Nigerian union cited by Adewale Ademoyega, *Why We Struck: The Story of The First Nigerian Coup*, (Ibadan: Evans Brothers 1981), Pg. 122.

groups were clearly defined and perpetuated by the constitution itself. The veneer of unity generated and maintained by the veil became exposed by the coming of disjointed mass.... Nigeria was not united, the Nigerians knew.²³

It has to be stated that the current terrorist activities observed brazenly in Nigeria did not start today. It was part of what led to the resistance of Sir Ahmadu Bello's leadership by Joseph Tarka. At the behest of the Premier of Northern Nigeria, Sir Ahmadu Bello in 1964, the Army was ordered to massacre the Tiv people for daring to resist the subjugation of its people under the leadership of Joseph Tarka. Soldiers were ordered to kill the men in the most bizarre manner ever heard.

Major Chris Anuforo, seeing some senior Northern officers, ordering the cutting off, of penises of Tiv men and nailing same on the doors of their homes, refused to be complicit in the killing and humiliation of the Tiv people fighting for their legitimate rights. Colonel Emeka Ojukwu had earlier out rightly refused to obey orders of deployment to participate in the Tiv / Middle Belt genocide and was only saved from court-marshal by his powerful father. Many other Igbo officers fell out with their Northern colleagues who obeyed orders and joined the massacre of the Tiv people. That is the aboriginal character of a true Igbo - justice and fair play to everyone, across-board. The world appears to be turning full cycle, and the Igbo hereby appeal to all ethnic groups to join them in seeking to heal the wounds of the nation through restructuring

²³. Odumegwu Ojukwu, *Biafra: Selected Speeches of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu*, (New York: Harper and Row 1968), Pg. 1.

our Union.²⁴

It was a trite fact that Major Anuforo who accompanied Colonel Pam to quell the “Tiv riot” that was to orchestrate the genocide of the Tivs, was very sympathetic to the Tiv rioters. He and Major Onwuatiegwu disobeyed Pam's orders. It is the tragedy of history that this resistance by Major Chris Anuforo was the sole reason why he and his Igbo folks who refused to obey the order to massacre the Tivs were killed in the counter Coup of July 29th 1967. Unfortunately, the prebendal orientation given by the British and taken higher by such Independence leaders as Sir Ahmadu Bello led to some Tiv people to join in killing Major Anuforo.

Why have I raised these foundational issues? What I have tried to do from the above is to be exhaustive in asserting that Nigeria is never intended to move towards positive social change and never to either open old wounds or to denigrate anybody. This view has been demonstrated by presenting the non-impressive understandings of Independence by most of Nigeria's Independence leaders. This resulted from the shackled foundations laid by British actors who amalgamated Nigeria in such a way that it can never be united; unity thus became a negotiable issue. J N Agbo's asserts:

We have tried to examine the basis for the often-cited mantra that, “Nigeria's unity is non-negotiable.” We have traced the antecedents of that position and shown conclusively that: one, even the British amalgamators of Nigeria know that Nigeria cannot be and was never united; two, that the so-called “Founding Fathers” of Nigeria also knew that Nigeria was not “one” and so had to fashion a federation as the minimum basis for

^{24.} ILT Advertorial Pg. 29.

co-existence; three, that the North of Nigeria that is screaming the “one Nigeria” mantra originally never believed in it, four, that the philosophy behind the “non-negotiable” brouhaha is economic and religious.²⁵

We now come to the main issue of the role of the philosopher at times like this in Nigeria after laying bare the foundational errors of the Nigerian state. Nigeria is in a decis- a situation where any little issue can cause deaths by a whisker. The so- called giant of Africa is wobbling in leadership failures of all ramifications, resulting to a new lexicon in development studies namely- counter-development. Counter-development is a development deficit to the effect of losing all or some of the developmental indices that was originally gained. For example, growing up in the eighties in Enugu, electricity and pipe-borne water were always there; but today, these have been lost to the extent that the relics of the showers in the bathrooms are regarded as artifact by children. What then should philosophers do at a time like this in Nigeria?

Philosophy in Africa has evolved beyond the initial identitarian challenge to doing developmental philosophy. One of the broad orientations in this regard is Afro-constructivism that recognises the African as a cultural and intellectual hybrid who can only survive by the fusion of deepening their epistemic experiences namely the global and African philosophical resources in a sort of heterosis. Agbakoba summarises this position with J. C. Chukwuokolo's view thus:

The emphasis here is on synthesis, synthesizing ideas out of diverse cultures and in so doing

²⁵ J N Agbo, *Sinking Structures on Faulty Foundations*, (Abakaliki: Alpha Citizens' Advocate Press, 2021), Pg. 50-51.

transcending or subsuming the feeder ideas....Jeremiah Chukwuokolo one of the young African scholars who have taken up this orientation describes it in an interesting Hegelian way: he sees pre-colonial African as the thesis, colonization and the West's adventure in Africa as the anti-thesis; and intercultural philosophy as the pursuit of a synthesis of the cultures of Africa and the West.²⁶

The idea of Afro-Constructivism arises from the conception that the African world-view has been deconstructed by the forces of the struggle between imperialism (colonialism, slavery and neo-colonialism) and Afro-centrism. This entails that for a society that has not found a veritable developmental ideology due to fierce battle of denial, counter denial and refutations between imperialism and Afro-centrism, there are the needs to reconstruct the society from the realities of the history of such society.

Afro-constructivism therefore is the perception that in African thought we do not apprehend an independent metaphysico – social reality, but construct a system of principles or norms governing right perception of the social order. Such construction is constrained by rationality and human nature to allow for reasoned perceptions of the Africa social order. This presupposes the idea of a Masonic construction from a set of ideas in the metaphysico-social reality of a people with the aim of expressing reality as it really is constituted.²⁷

^{26.} J C A Agbakoba, *Development and Modernity in Africa: An Intercultural Philosophical Perspective* (Rudiger Kopper Verlag: Koln 2019), Pg. 11.

^{27.} J C Chukwuokolo, "Towards an Afro-Constructivist Theory of Development", in *Frankfurter Afrikanistische Blätter* FAB- No 25. 2013 P 35.

Again, philosophy can advance the conception of positive justice by exploring a more practicable method of achieving the developmental trajectory that will enhance global justice of development and stability. This will be more appreciated if we examine positive and negative justice as they play out in the global capitalist system. Negative justice is advanced by the state in a retributive sense and the sort of development derivable from the sort of positive justice observable in Afro-constructive developmental paradigm that we are advocating here. This is seen in the Western penal system with all the dehumanisation there from. It is doubtful that negative justice as is being advanced within the paradigm of the Western penal system can ever create the room for reconciliation and pro-active solidarity. I doubt that if you imprison another, whether such a one can ever forgive you.

In the same vein some of the post-colonial rulers as Tafawa Balewa of Nigeria failed partly because they felt that the colonisers exploited them beyond redemption and therefore should be chased out of the system in a vendetta-oriented manner; thus, distancing them from the managerial and administrative positions in the post-colonial system. This attitude led to the strained relationship between the colony and the colonialist. The result was obvious; the creation of antagonistic booby traps that excluded and consumed these nations within the international system. There is no doubt that most of such nations exploded within the first six years of gaining flag independence. Nigeria had genocide that some people christened civil war; assassinations of radical post-independence leaders as Patrice Lumumba, coups and counter coups helped in the impoverishment of such nations to almost this irredeemable state they operate currently and which we are trying to offer the praxis of coming out from. But Lee Kuan Yew appears to understand this

afro-constructivist principle better when he literally begged the British colonisers as if his life and that of his country depended on the British. This served him better to the extent that with the help of the colonisers, his country moved from the Third world to the First world.

Another role philosophy can play at times like this in Nigeria arises from the importance of existentialism to humanity. One may be wondering whether there are any practical benefits of studying philosophy and let alone the problems of existentialism. Societies have been assessed with the values they possess that have propelled their developmental tapestry. Philosophy has three broad orientations to wit; ontology, values and knowledge. From the above, each individual is a product of certain values that give rise to a supreme value. A supreme value is such that every other value kowtows to. This is the value that every other intersection of values is subsumed into while making choices. For instance, if there is clash of value like the biblical account of Shedrack, Meshach and Abednego who would prefer to be thrown into the lake of fire as against bowing for King Nebuchadnezzar; that value upon which one can never bend is the supreme value. Societies and individuals have their supreme values and it is how these are built that determines the sort of social change any society imbibes in order to develop. In other words, the philosophical ideology upon which any society is built upon determines the level of development of such society.

It is the study of philosophy alone that can help any individual or society to build a virile ideology that propels its advancement in any way that it deems fit. This is because philosophy by its nature has methods that are *sui generis* (unique) that enhances its capacity to

penetrate beyond the facades of what the ordinary eyes can see in order to develop lasting values and ideology. Certainly, the value of philosophy to humanity can never be over emphasised.

Apart from the value base of humanity, philosophy also helps epistemologically to enthrone in man the capacity for critical and creative thinking. It is creative and critical thinking capabilities that have made humanity to develop the various cultures of living that he has in order to grapple with the existential challenges that he faces as he tries to master the cosmic space in which he is thrown into. Two major epistemic orientations were created from this namely rational (ideological) and empirical (materialistic) ideals. Given the above, any society or individual that holds either orientation to the extreme becomes deficient in one way or the other. The prevailing value base therefore forms any supreme value for such society or individual. Religion, education, development etc thus becomes products of such orientation.

How then will society or individual develop or advance positive social change? This question is very relevant as both our society and the individuals living in it have once in a while given up to the challenging issues of society they face. For instance, most African countries face leadership and developmental challenges because of over materialisation of their reality. This is due to empirical (materialistic) values they hold dearly. Materialistic values hold as their supreme values immediate gratification for the society with the result that those who hold such values are saturated with the thought of immediate gains; on the other side a rationalistic (ideological) value may look for more lasting values that may also negate some immediate human materialistic needs. Man is a product of both rationalistic and materialistic cravings. Any attempt

to over emphasise any of the value -base may lead to regrettable consequences. This is where creative and critical thinking of philosophy come in to assist in enthroning a rational society with drive for the betterment of all. The above may result from proper combination of certain kind of intelligence.

Psychologists, while carving out their independence from philosophy opine that there are four types of Intelligence namely: (1) Intelligence Quotient (IQ), (2) Emotional Quotient (EQ), (3) Social Quotient (SQ) and (4) Adversity Quotient (AQ). Intelligence Quotient is the measure of the determinacy of the level of one's comprehension capability. IQ is needed to solve issues as mathematics, memorise things, and recall lessons. On its own, Emotional Quotient is the measure of one's capability to maintain peace with others, keep to time, be responsible, be honest, respect boundaries, and be humble, genuine and considerate without demeaning another's strength. Social Quotient is the measure of the ability to build a network of friends and maintain it over a long period of time. Any individual or society that combines the above types of intelligence appropriately does advance better in all ramifications than those who do not deploy these intelligence models properly. Again, People that have higher EQ and SQ tend to go further in life than those with a high IQ but low EQ and SQ. Most schools capitalise on improving IQ levels while EQ and SQ are played down. So, you can see why your class mate who graduates with a first class may not do better than a third-class degree holder after school. For example, a man of high IQ can end up being employed by a man of high EQ and SQ even though he has an average IQ. EQ represents one's character, while a SQ represents one's charisma. Of what value then are these intelligence models both for society and individual? We advocate that any individual or

society that gives in to habits that will improve these three Qs, especially EQ and SQ will certainly fare better than those who are not advancing these intelligence models.

The fourth one, the Adversity Quotient (AQ) is the measure of the ability to go through a rough patch in life, and come out of it without losing one's mind. When faced with troubles, AQ determines who will give up, who will abandon their family, and who will consider suicide. One can appreciate it when parents expose their children to other areas of life other than just academics. They should adopt manual labor (never use work as a form of punishment), sports and Arts. The appropriate development of IQ, as well as EQ, SQ and AQ makes one a multifaceted human being able to do things independently of their parents. Finally, as the saying goes, do not prepare the road for your children; prepare your children for the road. How does this orientation affect the society? Plato would describe a state as “individual writ large”; given this, any society that gets its citizenry very well, would have become quite better than those who move without direction.²⁸

Supposing that parents as primary source of development could not expose their wards as we have advocated above, is it beyond repair? In other words, is there any situation where we can say that such situations are beyond redemption? The answer to the above gives way to the existentialist perception of the agent. An agential role in this situation revolves around the individuals who make up society. It is the individual that makes up the society and whether society

^{28.} See J C Chukwuokolo, “The Philosophy of the Problem of Human Existence” – a manuscript submitted the General Studies Unit of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki for publication in March 2025. I discussed exhaustively the issue of the existential role of philosophy to human development and have adapted some of it for our purpose in this paper.

will be good is therefore dependent on the individual agents that make it up. The existentialist would argue that since the individual is a free agent who can make decisions freely at any time, there is no time that it is too late to freely make such decision. Thus, situations where people deliberately through wrong imbue of values keep doing wrong things with the result that people believe that their society is irredeemable does not follow. This is because if we agree that the onus is on us as agential beings, we can from our own little corners resolve to advance our society. We must reconstruct our society and ourselves for the betterment of all and this is what we have called afro-constructivism. Finally, there is no irredeemable situation for the existential agent and here in lies our main thrust in this paper. We can change our society and ourselves if we resolve.

There is the other strand of challenge that has plagued Africa as a whole. This is articulated in the notion of what has today become identified in the following question; the Neo-black problem: must blacks be ruled by whites in order to prosper? If we recount the consequences of state capture by a coarse, brutal, rapacious, and counter-developmental political elite—a dramatic increase in poverty levels, illiteracy, banditry, insecurity, collapse of infrastructure and institutions, corruption, and virtually every conceivable public ailment, the above question might seem reasonable. This is especially when we attest to the fact that almost all African countries are not doing well in all ramifications. This is because in the estimation of lots of Nigerians, the country is now a failed or virtually failed state; name any indices of a failed state, you see them in our country. This has shown the rise or preference for the re-colonisation thesis- a clamour for a return to white rule. Recently, a segment of scholars in Europe are feigning concern for

Africa by their advocacy of the re-colonisation of Africa. The re-colonisation thesis has to be understood well. Agbakoba articulates the challenges as follows:

One, there are those who can afford to emigrate fairly legally, at least. So, they make their way to regions of white rule in the Western strongholds of Europe or North America, etc. This is the highly celebrated “japa”—escape from the bondage of fellow Black rule; two, illegal emigration to regions of white rule in spite of its many hazards by poorer but desperate young Africans: third, the stay-at-homes, especially the youth, who want a return of white rule to take over their failed governments. The fate of Nigeria is shared more or less by other sub-Saharan African countries. Recently, I listened to a viral clip by an apparently poor and frustrated South African calling for a return to white rule in her country for broadly similar reasons. In short, the neo-black dilemma may be framed as follows: is it better to live under white rule without political dignity but with basic life-sustaining standards for many? Or to live under black rule with illusory political dignity and without basic life-sustaining standards for the majority? We must square up to this problem in order to solve it. This begins with intellectual honesty and humility, utmost respect, and responsibility for truth, factuality, and functionality. Unfortunately, one of the flip sides of the protest politics of the African liberation struggle is the cultivation of a touchy egotistical response to everything real or imaginary, no matter how small, that robs off negatively on our struggle-inflated and hypersensitised egos (a

direct consequence of our struggle with a lingering alienation-negativity complex due to colonial racism). The path forward for Africa lies in cultivating higher and adequate levels of personal and communal agential integrity as well as full personal responsibility and productivity. Not to mention creativity (including epistemic creativity), productive justice (such as merit and freedom), harmony and reconciliation at local and international levels, and a proper domestication of capitalism and other related values and institutions.²⁹

Another serious issue that we must jettison as philosophers if we must advance Nigeria in order to create the desired social change that we have been clamouring for is to shun victimology because colonisation is virtually as old as human history and equally universal; and, as morally condemnable as it is, it has helped in attracting inter-cultural orientations that if properly imbibed would help us for cross-cultural comparisons, needed feedback mechanism and self- assessments. Many Asian former colonies have shown veritable examples of how to shun victimhood by imbibing and integrating helpful Western knowledge base and values to advance their states, irrespective of internal and neo-colonial obstacles. Why can't Nigeria do same by giving up on her disposition to panhandle and to outsource viable and veritable solutions? This is indeed what afro-constructivism is advocating.

Conclusion

I had set out in this paper to evaluate the critical issues of social change. I stated that the nexus between philosophy and social

²⁹ See J C A Agbakoba, "The Neo-black problem: Must blacks be ruled by whites in order to prosper?" Business Day Newspaper, October 16th 2024.

change are enormous but that since philosophy has unique methods of getting at the ultimate cause of all things, it is most equipped to enthrone the sort of social change desirable in Nigeria; hence my choice of the roles of philosophy in social change at a time like this in Nigeria. One thing that is certain is that there is no irreparable situation in the pursuit of the sort of social change that engenders positive development for any society. The arduous task of driving this sort of social change that we are clamouring for in order to lead to viable development lies with Nigerian philosophers. The question now is whether the current generation of Nigerian philosophers can live up to this historical responsibility? Certainly, we can if we accept to pay the price. This job is also enhanced with the coming of new forms of communication, such as social media digital libraries etc through which worthy initiatives can be easily incubated and accepted across borders. Failure will not bode well for us as it could lead to extinction. As Frantz Fanon would say; man is a metaphysical being of yes and no: yes to those things that conduce to his being and no to those that do not enhance his being. If we do not exercise our humanity in this regard, we should be willing to perish as a country. But if we do, we would have through conscious effort laid a foundation for a rational society. I challenge all of us here to pay our own prices.

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