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Forestalling the Scramble through Complementary Attitudinal Change

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Abstract:

The paper sheds light into the debilitating effect of lack of awareness of the contemporary Africans concerning the ambivalence of their situation and their inability to manage this ambivalence successfully. The author uses complementary reflection to give insight into the type of approach that is required towards addressing some major conflicts of interest within the ambit of contemporary African societies.

Main Text:

For better understanding, I have divided the contemporary African existential situation into two parts. The first I call *the African we know* while I call the second *the other Africa*. *The Africa we know* is the paradoxical African, the scrambled Africa which reflects human inability to come to terms with human ambivalent existential situation. *The other Africa* is the forgotten African that is a symbol of success in failure. The other African thus represents the successful Africa that hardly comes to mind when one thinks of things African. This paper would not belabour the obvious but would go straight to make suggestions on how the problem of the scrambled Africa can be approached from a complementary perspective.

The problem with *the Africa we know* has to do with mismanagement of ambivalent human situation, most especially in a changed situation. I call a situation ambivalent, where a person has the capacity to choose wrongly his genuine interest believing it to be the wisest thing to do. In such ambivalent situations, he actually chooses wrongly as we have it in most cases that create very porous grounds for the scramble to continue. Our contemporary African society is full of such ambivalences that invariably lead to errors of judgement concerning what the ego actually desires and how to go about it. This error can hold a person hostage unless he becomes aware of it. From this error arises a paradox which subsists in the fact that those things that we condemn and criticise are the very things we do. This is a precarious situation which subsists in a paradoxical ignorance that can be formulated thus “those things that the African says holds him hostage are the very things he does” again “those things that contribute to the scramble for Africa are the very things the African insists on doing and in some cases he even takes pleasure in doing them.” The case can still be depicted figuratively thus: A person says that a stuff is poisonous but you see this person patronising such stuff for his personal pleasure. Unless he is a poisoner or something of sort, we would hardly understand his action. If the stuff is poisonous and the person

insists in playing with it, we can say that he is ignorant. In the case of Africa we know, there is a poison that threatens the African without his being aware of it and this is one of the main reasons that the scramble continues.

Pointedly formulated, one can say that the attitude of the contemporary African to the common good leaves much to be desired. Almost at all strata of society, the African compromises the common good and believes that by serving the ego first, in total neglect of the totality, he can serve himself best. Here he acts in ignorance of a poison that threatens his existence. This approach to issues, though contrary to common sense, has been raised almost to a canon of auto praxis and social praxis. In almost every situation and in almost all events the average African seeks to serve his or her interest first in total neglect of the common good. He thereby negates the basic rule of common sense that consequent self-interest is anti-self-interest. In trying to secure my interest first, I would not mind if I should infringe on the rights of others many times over and thereby make myself a victim of my own rights. An Igbo proverb captures the ignorance associated with this approach to issues. It states that if a person holds his opponent to the ground in a wrestling bout he is not free himself unless he lets go his victim – *onye ji madu na ana ji onweya*. Any serious measures needed to redress this scramble today must therefore take into consideration the mechanisms needed for a consequent self-application of the ego towards its liberation from its own laws in the event of which the African comes to realise how to go about his ambivalent situations.

Since there is visibly a low-level awareness concerning the centrality of the legitimising role of the common good within the consciousness of the average contemporary African, Africans are the ones largely holding themselves hostage and not only the aftermath of slavery and colonialism as many erroneously suppose. In most cases, the African is the person exposing himself to all the conditions necessary for the scramble around his person. Although he facilitates this scramble, he feels that he is a victim and still believes that it is the wisest thing to do since he believes that he is doing himself a service through his egoistic tendencies. This is the paradox.

One can say that, in many decisive cases, we as African chose wrongly our ambivalent interests and thereby make ourselves very vulnerable to those things we seek to avoid. The plunder and pillage of Africa through outsiders can hardly take place should Africans take pains to know that their survival and dignity are inextricably tied to a common human destiny of which that of African is one. Those individuals and groups are likelier to uphold their integrity and cohesion survive adversity and excel, have more time for higher pursuits, who have a higher level of development of their natural common sense for self-preservation. Since the instinct of self-preservation is something that is fundamentally human, a human society is in the measure developed as all its members strive to seek self-preservation in the process of defining their interests in a harmonious complementary manner.

It is for this reason that those nations are likelier to achieve success and greatness more than others do where people have come to define their interests within the framework of the common good. This instinct becomes a threat again when it is localised and restricted only to groups of like-minds and closed common interests. To surmount the dangers associated with the realisation of the common good within a closed circle of coalition of interests, it must be conceptualised as an object of complementary harmonisation of people's interests bearing in mind that anything that exists serves a missing link of reality in view of the totality that gives legitimacy to all units. Hence, any attempts at responding inadequately to the demands of the law of self-preservation, portends great danger for human beings no matter their level of achievements. This is why the developed nations of our time, though great and admirable, become a threat to world peace when they use their advantaged positions to seek their interests outside the framework provided by the larger global family. Here all human beings must learn to act on the universal imperative of collective survival and not survival of only segments of the human species that collectively seek self-preservation in isolation of the rest. It is only under this redefinition of the common good within a complementary framework that the vicious circle of scramble at the least opening can be checked and be discontinued

Wherever and whenever people do not appreciate this learning process, it easily leads to all forms of confrontation and polarisation that often culminate in armed conflicts and survival of the fittest. This is the tragedy of the intolerant, particularistic and exclusive thinking of our world as it is epitomised in the case of the Africa we know or the scrambled Africa. It is the situation where the ego is disengaged from the legitimising foundation of its being. In this case, it seeks its legitimacy only within the laws of its own subjectivity. When this happens, the self becomes bogus, unpredictable and anti-self. It is for this reason that in the case of the scrambled Africa, Africans are some of the most visible modern conquerors of Africa and Africans but this time, the type that conquers himself under the illusion of conquering others. This is why there is hardly any African country today, which has not one sordid and sad tale to tell, many decades after independence. Here, all the hypocritical, heartless exploiters deserve the worst form of contempt wherever they may be found.

In this respects, traditional African societies, in many vital issues, can be seen as more developed and advanced societies, than our contemporary African societies. In many cases, this traditional society had the capacity to choose her authentic interests unequivocally. This can hardly be said of many contemporary African societies their enormous resources and opportunities notwithstanding.

Just as things contemporary African, often Africans know the best political and humanistic theories. The true liberation of Africans and African Nations will start the moment Africans learn to match words with deeds and the moment words start to have the meanings they express and intend. In this case, the moment Africans start to practice all those ideals that are entrenched in such words as Ujamaa, communalism, Ubuntu, complementarity, democracy, human rights, freedom, justice, liberty, universalism, transparency, accountability, free and fair elections etc.

From here would ensure a higher-level comprehensiveness with regard to the way the ego relates to its interests. It is a form of transformation that seeks to realise an authentic form of the experience of transcendent complementary unity of consciousness devoid of ambivalence. One can then say that the first independence that many African nations attained was of a socio-political type. The greatest struggle of the contemporary African is the struggle towards this new form of self-consciousness in all facets of encounter between the ego and the world, in private life as well as in the wider world of interaction between the individual and society.

The struggle to attain this higher form of self-consciousness must be fought with more determination and tact than the one needed to win political independence. This new struggle must culminate in *a complementary attitudinal change and must seek to make the experience of transcendent complementary unity of consciousness a canon of praxis and auto praxis*. Here the mind learns to identify this experience as a necessary condition for surmounting the challenges posed by the world.

It is this type of complementary experience that unifies the traditional African and the traditional Igbo in particular, to the world. It is the highest form of actualisation of communal experience as shared experience. This experience helped the traditional African address, relatively successful, most of the challenges posed by his world.

In keeping with the demands of this transcendent complementary unity of consciousness, the traditional Igbo, for example, conceptualises human life as a struggle that must be embarked upon in a unified complementary manner bearing in mind that no man is perfect; in this case, human beings can surmount difficulties only in creative recourse to all the opportunities the world has to offer. Guided by the dictates of this experience, the mind focuses on the comprehensiveness of its ultimate end and seeks to actualise this as a necessary condition for its self-determination and self-actualisation. Thus, acting from this consciousness, a person always seeks to choose those values that have always made human beings free and societies great and seeks his personal authentication in universal complementary harmonious framework. Here, he comes to the realisation that his interests are inextricably tied to the totality of which he is a part. It subsists in the ability to relate to past and present events in view of the future referential totality that gives them their ultimate meaning. In other words, the ego learns in the process of this form of self-actualisation to identify its interests with the common good and to see the common good as a necessary condition towards its own self-actualisation.

Where this change has taken place, personal autonomy would be conceptualised beyond the dictates of socio-economic conditions as to include pursuance of all values in view of a total and comprehensive liberation of the ego from its own laws. Here, we are dealing with a form of self-emancipation that invariably connotes emancipation of the whole and vice versa. Where this process has been consummated, we can talk of complementary attitudinal change which is a condition for the experience of the joy of being. This transformation has become necessary because there is every indication that in contrast to the traditional African idea of the internal mechanics of leadership, the contemporary African leadership structure is built around a corrupt form of the principle of complementarity. Here, a vile form of we-feeling founded around the idea of nepotism supplants the idea of transcendent complementary unity of consciousness that played a low-level legitimising role within the ambit of traditional African life.

Furthermore, for this transformation to take place there is need for a thorough overhaul of the meaning Africans attach to some concepts. These include such commonplace but often misused ideas as morality, immorality, good, evil, common good, public property, work, employment, private interest, patriotism, justice, injustice, freedom, violence, tribe, war, peace, welfare, patience, endurance, poverty, wealth, democracy, election. Others include nepotism, money, title, embezzlement, bribery, corruption, tribalism, wastefulness, recklessness, insincerity, negligence, 419, foreign, foreign intervention, migration, overseas, imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, race, racism, domination, capitalism, exploitation, etc.

All these concepts must be seen as inclusive and comprehensive to have any meaning. Besides, the form of rationalisations and equivocations that have hitherto driven these concepts in the minds of many average contemporary African must give way to a new form of understanding. Here the mind must learn to view these concepts as deriving their meaning from the same foundation of legitimacy as gives meaning to the actions of all human beings in society. Without this comprehensive approach to issues of daily living, the ideals entrenched in such modern socio-political concepts like Ujamaa, communalism, authenticity and Ubuntu would ever remain a distant dream. This radical form of attitudinal change can be considered the sum total of all the positive measures the African needs to emancipate himself from both the internal and external constraints that make it impossible for him to be aware that the scramble is continuing and indeed with his full involvement, cooperation and ironically with him at the same time as a victim.

Where the African misses this comprehensive approach, misperceives and misanalyses his situation, he takes solace in the thought that his problems are from the outside. This is the time such catchphrases as *neo-colonialism, imperialism and exploitation, outside interference* etc. are misused as ideological escapist weapons to pursue nefarious objectives inspired by egocentrism. In all these situations, one of the most fundamental problems of Africa we know is being misidentified. In most of these cases, the African mistakes self-imposed hardship with external manipulation. Likewise, his inability to manage the ambivalence of his situation successfully conceals from him who his true conquerors and enemies are. This position is in consonance with the ontology of traditional African philosophy of complementary direction, which sees all world immanent realities as opportunities for a harmonised experience of the joy of being.

All these cannot be achieved if the genuine high regard, which the traditional African accorded the spiritual dimension of the human person is not rediscovered and given due attention. This has suffered a great blow in view of the type of pseudo-religiosity prevalent in most contemporary African communities (Asouzu Effective Leadership 128-141). In the Africa of our contemporary experience, religious syncretism and eclecticism without clearly defined character, replaces the traditional African approach to religion, which was characterised by clear-cut religious commitment. In the traditional African milieu religion was a serious, transparent and honest personal commitment between the ego, the community and those spiritual entities that constituted the same transcendent complementary unity of consciousness with the world. Here, genuine religiosity was integrated into authentic search for meaning. It was a genuine absolute commitment devoid of hypocrisy. For the traditional African religion was not a pass time affair neither was it a part time preoccupation but a fulltime personal encounter with the divine. The sooner contemporary Africans rediscover the legitimising role of authentic religion the sooner also would they be in a position to have stronger footing in the being that gives legitimacy to their action. For this reason, there is need for a thoroughgoing rehabilitation of the African psyche in a changed contemporary situation. The objective of

this change is to lead the mind to choose correctly those things that auger well with its own interest. The type of change needed in the face of the challenges facing Africans is a comprehensive rehabilitation of the human person from the constraints of its situation.

Cultural dynamism, practical existential scepticism and pessimism

One of the gravest consequences of misidentification of the problem of the Africa we know is that it leads to what I call practical existential scepticism and pessimism; a state from which the scrambled Africa must be emancipated. This is a form of contemporary African delusive, negative mind-set state that often throws overboard tested wisdom of age and insists on doing things *the African way* that is totally un-African, anti-African, anti-common sense and anti-rational. This form of scepticism and pessimism is one of the necessary conditions that facilitate the continuous scramble for Africa. It is recourse to a false ego that makes Africa cheap and attractive for exploitation. It is a breeding ground for rejection of what is African and the consequent enthronement of what is believed to be the true need of the African. In this way the scramble continues and here again the African is a key facilitator without knowing it.

One the level of the ordinary African in the street, this doubtfulness and pessimism finds expression in tendency of the mind not to reach out beyond its cocoon and seek for excellence. Indeed, it is a state of unconscious or internalised doubt concerning the self-worth of the human mind to live beyond a world of miniature values. This is *African the dwarf mentality*. In this case, many average contemporary Africans, through their actions, do not believe in the universality of basic human values; as such they must be content with a diminutive form of almost everything, except questionable values, since they imagine these higher values unfit for the African; a negative attitude to the world, sort of. Here, we are dealing with serious cases of mass ignorance as it relates to the attitude of many average contemporary Africans. It is this mind-set that makes Africa vulnerable to scramble.

This ignorant African is the forgetful African who easily forgets that such basic things as eating nutritious food and drinking healthy drinks in a clean and hygienic environment, alleviating people's suffering through adaptation to better insights, having more refined forms of recreation and indulging in useful pastime are not ideas alien to African culture. This ignorant African easily overlooks the contribution Africans makes in the complementary evolution of ideas and human values. This is the African, who believes that foreigners have all the credit in the fabrication and development of products even the ones he has adapted for his use.

This African does not see any form of resourcefulness and innovation in the way Africans adapt technologies to their needs and integrate new ideas into the fabric of their modern culture. He sees things in black and white. All good things come from foreign lands and Africa must gape with awe at all forms of development and novelties. For this reason, those things, which are considered bad and useless for the rest of the world must still be good and manageable for Africa. This African is pleased when Africa is turned to a dumping ground for useless commodities and merchandise in the belief that what is bad elsewhere is still good and manageable in Africa. In Nigeria, to be precise, this is today personified by the so-called "Belgium mentality" which is now fashionable. Here, all used products from all over the world are collected, imported, tagged "Belgium" and sold to Nigerians at exorbitantly high prices. The myth is that they are better than new products manufactured especially in Nigeria. For this reason, if a dishonest trader wishes to sell any useless old stuff, he seeks to convince the buyer that it is "Belgium" and the magic is perfect. In this way the scramble continues.

This African that is caught in this twisted consciousness is not comprehensively self-conscious and does not believe that the best is good for him; he would always manage and be grateful to be worthy to be considered fit for the global dustbin. His attitude is understandable since his idea of the good is not comprehensive enough. Besides, he does not see how he is an integral part of all good things in the world that result from the mutual complementarity of human resourcefulness. Since he imagines that good things are for some people who are solely responsible for these, he must be contented to be considered worthy of even the worst. He is doubtful, even in his own capacity, to do things better, to change his situation for the best, to compete with others internationally. He is hardly aware of the implications of his extended natural rights that empower him to be a co-originator of all the positive values of our world. He sees others as special creatures destined to excel while he himself exists to gape with awe at the good that exists

independent of his being as a person. This is existential pessimism and scepticism at work. This African easily embarks on all forms of self-rejection and self-pity to prove his modernity; he seeks to catch up but as a dwarf in a dwarfish way. Approaching with trepidation, he takes solace in half measures and is contented.

We witness these negative tendencies daily in the cases of those Africans whose dwarfish minds give them most baffling ideas. Here, they stride in their dwarfish ways and start to reject their Africanness and to seek refuge in a false ego. This is the case among the Igbo, where many today change their African names to their foreign language equivalent. Here Ngozi in Igbo becomes Blessing, Udo becomes Peace, and Onyinye becomes Gift etc. We are also aware of the new trend in Africa today, especially in some well-to-do circles, where people find it even prestigious to scorn at their own native languages and prefer foreign languages as languages of communication even at home. Here, children are encouraged to speak foreign languages only as sign of showing modernity. The tragedy is that these children often know neither the foreign language well, nor do they understand, talk less of speaking their native languages.

All these happen where people complain bitterly of foreign domination. This is definitely not the way to cast off the yoke of foreign domination. This tightening of the yoke is paradoxically characteristic of the contemporary African sheepish and copycat mentality, and often wrongly, of all things western in an age where they are complaining about the effects of colonialism and external manipulation (Asouzu, *The Heuristic Principles*). Wherever this form of mentality is in place, the scramble would definitely continue. With regard to the reactionary spirit, this mind-set sees human history in a one-dimensional form of antagonistic and irreconcilable opposites. The contemporary reactionary mind-set stays at the other pole of this illiterate mind-set and seeks a unique African version of almost everything. Here, one wishes to prove that Africa is different in very indeterminate ways. Instead of commitment to the excellences in the human spirit, this reactionary mind-set sees Africa as the stagnant museum piece of world history. These paradoxically pursue *the modern thesis of Africa the living dead*. Wiredu with his conceptual decolonisation is a typical example. For this reactionary mind-set, African values are entrenched in the carvings and artefacts stored in the villages. For this mind-set, if you wish to experience African, go to the villages and forests; in fact dig deep for archaeological treasures and surprises.

To forestall the scramble, one has to confront these two positions head on in the process of a thorough going complementary attitudinal change. In this case, one can say that most of the values that we consider foreign have always formed the point of focus of authentic African existence and living. This is why, even today, these will continue to play a major role in our lives as human beings and as individuals seeking higher forms of self-actualisation. Association of fundamental human values with negative historical experiences easily leads to alienation. Where this happens, we would tend to reject positive experiences as a part of our cultural heritage and insist only on some of those obsolete and often overtaken relics of history as our cultural heritage. Those who argue that Africa is the origin of Greek Philosophy, appear not only to be alluding to the case of a disciple turning around to lord it over his master, but are also saying that there is a symbiotic relationship in all forms of human co-existence. Human relationship grows through mutual complementarity. This has always characterised human experience in his relativity as a historical being. Not to live in mutual complementarity would be a departure from human nature. In most cases, the wise internalise those positive changes they find in history and claim them as their own, doggedly and remorselessly too. Interestingly, we tend to ascribe positive ideas to those who make claims to them most energetically and consistently. Where they succeed in doing so, we learn to associate them with such positive ideas. *This is human and can bring much needed freshness in human struggle for self-actualisation; the sooner Africans learn this simple trick the better.*

One observes how the so-called developed and industrialised countries emphasise their right to novel ideas and when they succeed in convincing everyone on how innovative they can be, we easily also forget that all forms of human resourcefulness are as a result of mutual cross-fertilisation and complementarity of ideas. Only very careful observers are aware of the complementary genesis of those important ideas that influence our world. A typical example is the principle complementarity. Many erroneously believe that Niels Bohr was the first person to formulate the principle of complementarity in total neglect of the fact that this principle has long formed a basic important paradigm of Ancient Egyptian

philosophy. Such claims of “first discovery” are often as absurd as they are loathsome and indeed they have much to do with diverse forms of unrepentant, acquisitive and exploitative spirit that underlies the claims that peoples discover peoples and nations are discover nations. A person does not discover a principle because he applies it effectively in one discipline, in this case in quantum physics. In the same way colonialists do not discover nations because they happen to find themselves in unknown territories. This form of we-and-them spirit is one of the necessary ingredients that fan the amber of the scramble. It there should at all be discovery it must be mutual and in the spirit of complementarity.

It is only in the true spirit of mutual complementarity, by mutual adaptation and reformulation of ideas that human societies and cultures take specific shapes. Insisting only on authentically African can hardly do the African any good There is nothing wrong with a person adapting to new ideas and values in a way that in the process of doing so they become an integral part of his lifestyle. Human values are subject to the changes and demands of circumstances. It is in such dialectical, complementary and symbiotic process of adaptation and change that human culture grows, is vitalised and revitalised. In this way, culture is the sum total of the experiences of a people, irrespective of their sources of origin. Where this happens, those positive changes we find in society today become integral parts of our cultures and our personalities even if we resemble each other in some matters somehow.

Hence, some of those Africans who create the impression that some of the universal values establishing human societies do not apply to Africans, do so to detriment of Africans.

For this reason, the assumptions both of the illiterate and the reactionary mind-sets are grounded on an error of oversimplification with regard to the universal applicability of basic human values. Both mind-sets seek an exclusive Africa that is different from the rest of humanity. Where this happens, the tendency also is to associate Africa with questionable values that have nothing to do with the nature of things.

In this way, we create and are committed to an Africa with a diminutive and estranged version of almost everything. Thus, there is African conception of time, mannerism, punctuality, accountability, tolerance of corruption, respect for old age even those of corrupt and errant leaders. Likewise, there is an African version of running of schools, social institutions, attitude to work, market economics etc. More recently also we have African consumption pattern which believes in feeding from the waste products of the rest of the world. In the same way, we have the African attitude to good brain. Here the good brains of African are not good enough for African socio-economic development. It must be exported and drained. This is the derided traditional Igbo butcher mentality. He slaughters the fattest animals but feeds from the bones (ogbu erighi). Similarly, there is African form of government. Here many insist that democracy, for example, must have an African version based on family-centred African form of unitary government to be an instrument of positive change and transformation in society.

Since this mind-set is fallacious, we are facing a case of delusion of unimaginable proportion and consequences. In some cases, those who propound these ideas create loopholes with which to exploit the system further. This is why a corrupt leader today who is an old man would like to remain untouchable and he would like to be given all the honour due to an old man even if he misuses his position to inflict unbearable hardship on his people. We know certainly how the traditional Africans handled some of such exploitative old men who should know and have become a liability to their communities. Unoka the slothful old man in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* was the butt of society (Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* 12-13). Traditional African societies were built on the contractual canon of mutual justice and respect. What this means is that people who were not able to fulfil their part of the contract were made to pay for it often in the most astonishing ways. This is why nothing hindered this community to go to any extreme to see that justice was done. Unjust old men were not spared the harshest treatments. This is why such old men could be sold into slavery. It is in this connection that one can understand Igwegbe when he observes that war “drums are talking drums prepared with the skin of old men” (Igwegbe 58).

The readiness to assimilate what is good and reject what is detrimental is what makes nations and human beings great and therein subsists effective casting off the yoke. A way of life is not desirable just because it is African and people must not discard a way of life just because it is foreign. Human culture upholds its dynamism, it can be improved upon and grow, only within the framework of complementarity.

Where we see the world in this light, we would be in a position to appropriate any positive ideas wherever we encounter them. If we do so, it is our natural right to do so and not a privilege. Major positive and useful ideas that transform our lives are no monopoly of any culture but universal human values that gather momentum out of human efforts to come to terms with the constraints of their situation and in the bid to survive adversity. In the relationship of ideas to each other, we cannot, often tell where the point of demarcation between originality and adaptation starts and ends. Anyone who rejects ideas just because they are foreign is trying to reject his own shadows. The rule is applicable to all facets of life.

In the ability to identify ourselves positively with our ideas and to transform our environment, subsists all forms of novelty and originality. *Although a person cannot reinvent the wheel, this person can turn it to a position where others can admire and talk about.* This is what makes peoples and nations great. The ingenuity of modernity and of the digital age does not subsist in reinventing the wheel but in turning the wheel and ornamenting it with objects as to radiate beauty in a way that harmonises with the complementary unity of all missing links of reality. In this sense, *human culture is an ongoing process, which subsists in our ability not to reinvent the wheel but in our dynamic ability to turn the wheel to the demands and exigencies of our situation and in full consciousness that we are turning the wheel in a manner that would bring positive changes in our lives and society.* This is also a very important dimension of cultural dynamism in a complementary perspective.

Here we seek to use what we have in the most insightful and resourceful manner to effect changes and recognise such changes as an integral part of the totality of our being and are proud to take credit for that. This is what adaptation and responsiveness to challenges demand. This approach contrasts with the type of self-negation or alienation arising from all forms of existential pessimism and scepticism. This is what re-positioning one's psyche in changed circumstances means.

This approach rejects recourse to old clichés and all forms of overtaken life-style. It affirms the perfectibility and augmentation of what one has in the light of new insights as a mark of progress. This is what cultural revival and revitalisation means. It is at this point that conservation and creation show their commitment to the principle of complementarity. The reason for this is that what it takes to conserve is what enters into creation and what enters into creation is based on what has been conserved. In this way, the present historical situation of any given culture is the sum total of a people's present experience of which new and acquired elements are joined inextricably to form a complementary harmonious whole.

From this background, we notice that no human society has a monopoly over the good values of life. In the same way, no human society can conceptualise itself in negative characteristics and still uphold its legitimacy. Hence, such bad habits as lateness, disorderliness, shabbiness, inconsistency, indolence, lack of initiative, wrangling, deceit, laziness, dishonesty, 419 etc. are un-African and are vices that humanity has always tried to battle and overcome. To see them as integral patterns of a culture is to subjugate the mind to violent distortion. No human society can perform its function well and progress which makes equivocations concerning the very foundations of human existence.

What this means is that words and concepts have meanings beyond their subjective usage. Our success in their usage depends on our ability to harmonise what we have in mind with what things authentically stand for. In the case of the concept *democratic government*, for example, there is something it seeks to express beyond those meanings we attach to it within given contexts. As something tailored towards human happiness, its objective is not inherently evil. The failures of governments and social institutions are due, largely, to human weakness. Hence, the argument that democracy or any system of government cannot work in Africa is fallacious because no system of government is intrinsically constitutive of the nature of any human society. The same is the case when some Africans wrongly imagine that only certain forms of human expertise are congenial to their way of life. The failures of people, institutions and governments have to do with the inability or unwillingness of human beings to learn and implement those positive ideas that auger well with their interests. Hence, neither democracy nor despotism is an absolute value in itself. We can say the same with regard to theocracy, monarchy, one party system, military dictatorship and all those forms of government that may become necessary as missing links of reality as given circumstances demand.

The tendency to negate relative historical conditions as they play a role in the lives of human institutions is at the root of those arguments that insist that certain forms of democracy are foreign to Africa. Here the tendency also is to look upon the traditional African communitarian socio-political set-up as an absolute point of reference for the technicalities of governance and control. Even if this society at a certain point in time had what it took to be successful within a given historical situation, it may not be adequate to handle the demands of more complex set-up as we have it today. When adaptation to change becomes adaptation to preconceived ideas, it acquires an inherent moment of absoluteness, which renders it impracticable as a paradigm of authentic existence. Unless the retrogressive veil falls, which seeks to localise what is authentically African in negative tendencies, contemporary African can hardly also have clear parameters for authenticity existence and progress.

All positive values such as cleanliness, basic hygiene, self-consciousness, orderliness, punctuality, reliability, high sense of aesthetic, good taste for food, clothing, drinks etc. are deeply entrenched in human nature and are inventions of no particular culture. They are tacit canons of man's quest towards contented living. The same is applicable with regard to the sense of justice and fair play, ability towards sensible managements of the challenges arising from the fear of the unknown, committed management of resources, dependability, respect for law and order, respect for the dignity of the human person, regard for human freedom etc. All these are aspects of our common human heritage. Our attitude to these values may differ due to spatio-temporal constraints but they are fundamentally entrenched in human consciousness as our response to the demands of the natural law of self-preservation. In the case of punctuality, the absence of a centralised and unified system of regulating time is largely accountable for the so-called *African time*; and to convert a handicap to a norm, in a changed situation, would amount to self-inflicted injury.

Strict adherence to the demands of those values that characterise and sustain our humanity made the traditional African society great and admirable. In the actualisation of the positive values of our humanity is concretely localised the joy of being.

Therefore, contemporary African societies can be modern and industrialised while retaining those positive values, found in traditional African societies, that have always characterised and made human societies noble and interesting. Africans cannot achieve this through a free ride on the back of others. On the contrary, they must achieve this through hard work, self-discipline, dedication and ability to learn, in the systematic process of re-discovery and appreciation of the positive potentials of the human spirit and in the ability to identify personally with these values as things intrinsically human.

Here the positive attitude towards the common good as the binding force of all positive ideas becomes decisive and indeed the scramble discontinues the moment the common good is made the pivot of complementary harmonious coexistence between individuals and nations.

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