

**FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE'S NIHILISM AND THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY**

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**Abstract**

*In the present-day era, some people strive and adopt any means to measure up with the requirement of society. For some what matter is how successful one is, with little or no regard for the means of the attainment of such success. Hence, they employ theories of man being a wolf to a fellow man, survival of the fittest and might is right in their dealings, leaving behind the moral system which is paramount in human relations. This work aims to examine Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy, especially his notion of nihilism to relate it to the Nigerian society. It also exposes the decline in the Nigerian value system to proffer solutions to them. We shall employ the method of analysis in this work for a better understanding and clarification of the concepts under discussion. It finds that Nietzsche's concept of nihilism plays out a scene in Nigerian society. We suggest a reevaluation of Nigeria's moral system to treat people as an end in themselves and to seek the common good.*

**Keywords:** Nihilism, Value, Cultural Crisis, Morality

**Introduction**

Friedrich Nietzsche a renowned philosopher and the lonely prophet, having seen the meaninglessness, nothingness and absurdity of Judeo/Christian belief in God in modern Europe, announced to the world his shocking discovery that God is dead, (he does not mean that God does not exist but God is dead). This death of God paved way for cultural crises, moral decay, lack of value, no objective truth and insanity in his society. Hence, Nietzsche advocated for the reevaluation of one's morality to be an overman.

Accordingly, in the light of Nietzsche, one may equally observe that in present Nigeria there is a cultural crisis and lack of value, where people are more concerned with pleasure, power, wealth and connection rather than upholding moral values, good character formation and tenets of Christianity. It has become a society where honesty is disregarded, indolence is extolled, and probity is derided. Thus, there is no regard for God and humanity, rule of law and societal values, but the promotion of violence, anarchy, corruption, injustice, and loss of properties and lives. Therefore, this research seeks to examine Nietzsche's notion of nihilism vis a vis Nigeria society, to proffer a solution to the decline in her value system. It will analyze various kinds of nihilism as experienced in Nigeria viz, religious, ethical, educational, political, and economic nihilism among others.

### **Conceptual Clarification on Nihilism**

The term 'nihilism' is derived from the Latin word 'nihil' that means 'nothing'. It is a philosophical viewpoint that suggests the denial or lack of belief towards the meaningful aspect of life. Most commonly, nihilism argues that life is without objective meaning, purpose or intrinsic value. It holds that values are baseless, meaningless and nothingness. It believes that nothing can be communicated or known. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche characterized nihilism as emptying the world and especially human existence of meaning, purpose, comprehensible truth or essential value. He defined the term as any philosophy, rejecting the real world around us, and physical existence along with it, which results in apathy toward life and poisoning of the human soul (Crosby 30).

The death of God and the breakdown of belief in Christian moral values by implication expose man to the danger of nihilism because most men know no other values except those rooted in Christianity. Thus, Nietzsche observes:

The belief in the absolute immorality of nature...and meaninglessness is the psychologically necessary effect once the belief in God and an essentially moral order becomes untenable. Nihilism appears at that point... because one has come to mistrust any meaning in suffering, indeed in existence. One interpretation has collapsed; it now seemed as if there was no meaning at all in existence as if everything were in vain. (35).

Affirming the above Omoregbe opines that the future is blinking and uncertain, as mankind is now empty and drifting aimlessly without light and guidance (125). Since nature abhors a vacuum, the existential vacuum left in the being of man as a result of the death of God, inevitably results in nihilism. Emphasizing this, the nineteenth-century nihilistic philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche defined nihilism as "the penetrating feeling of nothingness" (528). Here, one may ask, where is nihilism taking us? In an attempt to answer this, Nietzsche in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* observes, "Are we not perpetually

fallen? Backwards, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is more and more night not coming on all the time?" (126). So, this shows the effect of nihilism on mankind, since they have refused to follow the part of objective truth and value. Nihilism can be classified into many kinds such as:

### **Cosmic Nihilism**

This regards nature as either wholly unintelligible or indifferent to basic human concerns. In either case, the cosmos is seen as giving no support to distinctively human aims or values, and it may even be regarded as actively hostile to human beings. "The absolute form of cosmic nihilism denies the universe any form of intelligibility or meaning" (Craig 29). Schopenhauer holds that the cosmos has no intelligible structure whatsoever. Cosmic nihilism is then something of an oxymoron since it means that there is no such thing as a "cosmos" in the sense of an intelligible and moral order in nature that humans can discover and conform to.

### **Moral or Ethical Nihilism**

This kind of nihilism denies any possibility of justifying moral judgements on the ground that morality is a cloak for egoistic self-seeking and therefore a sham. Moral principles are nothing more than expressions of subjective choices, preferences or feelings of people who endorse them. Ethical or moral nihilism is the view that good and evil do not indicate any specific meaning or value system. In other words, they deny any chance of absolute moral values. Whatever is held by people as a standard or right pattern of Life and living is nothing but the result of social and emotive pressure. Moral or ethical nihilism rejects the possibility of absolute moral or ethical values.

### **Epistemological Nihilism**

Epistemological nihilism denies the possibility of justifying claims to knowledge because it assumes that a foundation of infallible, universal truths would be required for such assessments and no such thing is available. This is because it views all claims to knowledge as entirely relative to cultural contexts or the vagaries of individual thought. This kind of nihilism views knowledge as ultimately arbitrary and incommensurable because it sees all attempts at its justification or criticism as useless. In summary, Epistemological nihilism denies the possibility of knowledge and truth; this kind of nihilism is currently identified with post-modern anti-foundationalism.

### **Political Nihilism**

Political nihilism calls for the destruction of existing political institutions, along with their supporting outlooks and social structures but has no positive message of what should be put in their place and this is a precondition for any political betterment. It is associated with the belief that the destruction of all existing socio-political order is a prerequisite for future improvement. It is the realization that all values are relativistic.

### **Existential Nihilism**

Existential nihilism is that kind of nihilism which negates the meaning of human life, judging it to be irremediably pointless, futile and absurd (Craig 1). Thus, human existence has no purpose, value, or justification. There is no reason to live and yet we persist in living. The human situation is therefore absurd. The philosophical position of existential nihilism is that a genuinely meaningful life is impossible, that is the notion that life has no intrinsic meaning or value.

### **Nihilism and Nigeria Society: A Philosophical Appraisal**

Nietzsche's radical nihilism which states that "God is dead" set the ball in motion, this ball is now on Nigerian's pitch. An inquisitive study of the Nigerian situation reveals that Nietzsche's nihilism has been translated into Nigeria. Affirming this, Obasanjo in his book, *This Animal Called Man* laments that "the elementary wrong in man is his Godlessness, his autonomous conduct, which is apparently without reference to God" (251). At the root of Nigerian nihilism is corruption which is synonymous with the word 'Nigeria'. Corruption has eaten deep into the Nigerian system in the sense that it cuts across various areas like morality, religion, education, economy, politics etc. Nigeria is in the horrible hands of nihilism and the description of Nigeria as a corrupt country is an understatement. Rather, it is a country of nihilism whereby everything is permitted and accepted. Hence, there is an absence of a meaningful and central objective capable of bonding the nation together, no pivot, no sense of common good, and no coherency and consistency. This, as a result, causes a lack of understanding among the leaders, between the leaders and the led, and among the followers themselves. Thus, lawlessness, violence and survival of the fittest became the order of the day. (Stumpf 232). The so-called giant of Africa is known for moral debasement, ethnic crises and cries of marginalization, religious skirmishes, political assassinations, examination malpractices, bribery, cultism and economic hardship. From the foregoing, it is alleged that Nigeria is in a state of nothingness. For a proper and systematic exposition of the Nigerian situation, one examines it from the point of view of moral, religious, educational, economic and political nihilism.

Naturally, man is a moral being and morality is a term designated to mean “principle concerning right and wrong or good and bad behaviour, the extent to which something is right or wrong, good or bad; among others, according to moral principles, a particular system of moral principles” (Crowther 755). Nigerians have deflated such standards because of the relativism of morality. Thus, moral nihilism in Nigeria constitutes her departure from living moral life that is proper to man as man to an immoral life. Therefore, moral nihilism is a rape of morality. It is a situation, whereby people have invented their principles to replace the objective standard of morality. That is, people create principles that are favourable to them, leaving aside the general guiding moral principles behind. It is turning moral values upside down and a consequence of deliberate disregard for God the epitome of morality. In a situation of moral nihilism in Nigeria, what do you think would be the order of the day? No doubt, the net effect is a moral eclipse. The morality and future of the country will be nothing to be desired, this is because, against the backdrop of moral lapses, one cannot but accept the painful truth that the future is quite bleak for Nigeria. Immorality reigns supreme. Accordingly, prostitution, depraved character, juvenile delinquency, and perpetual lying, have turned Nigeria into a dungeon of immorality. Consequently, immorality stirred a high rate of corruption in Nigeria. Unbridled corruption of unquantifiable magnitude has been the bane of society. This situation has caused havoc on the fabric of the nation, annihilating the moral norms and values of the nation. Corruption has permeated into high and low places to the extent that it has become her second nature such that the nation has been tagged the second most corrupt in the world (Ezeani 7). This moral pathology has seriously uprooted justice, equity, meaningful co-existence, and objectivity as well as the standardized moral norm in Nigeria. What else is moral nihilism if not that the majority of Nigerians have lost the sense of meaning resulting in a moral eclipse?

Among philosophers and scholars, defining religion has been a controversial issue. Religion is located and conceived in different ways by different people, and its definition varies. Etymologically, religion comes from the Latin root *religare* which means to bind, *relegere* which denotes a link and *religio* which explains a relationship. It explains a relationship that binds persons with the divine (Okoro 11). However, the following seems to be generally acceptable. For J.M. Yinger religion is:

A system of belief and practices through which a group of people struggle with the ultimate problems of human life. It expresses their refusal to capitulate to death, to give up in the face of frustration, and to allow hostility to tear apart their human association (7).

Further, in the view of A.C. Bouquet: “religion is a fixed relationship between the human self and some non-human entity, the sacred, the supernatural, the self-existent, the absolute or simply God” (Uwaezuoke 38). Therefore, religion is characterized by belief, rituals, a sense of the sacred, prayer, religious feelings, mystery and awe. For Feuerbach, Religion is a sort of dream and the idea of God is an invention by human beings because they feel helpless in an alien world and need God to comfort them. Karl Marx defines it as “the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world just as it is the spirit of the spiritless world; it is the opium of the people” (Marx and Engels 39).

Nigeria would have been a paradise if her understanding of religion rappsports with the above definitions. Sadly, she has a negative notion of religion as she was influenced more or less by religious critics who were mostly atheists. Religion is viewed more from negativity than positivity. This is evident from the point of view that God no longer lives in the hearts of Nigerians because they have killed Him. This is catastrophic for Nigeria as she faces violence upon violence, wars upon wars, and crises upon crises resulting in purposelessness, emptiness, nothingness and nihilism of her existence. Now that God is dead in the hearts of Nigerians, nihilism becomes a direct consequence. Religious nihilism is the conviction that the highest values and more which one once accepted are untenable and added to this is the insight that there is no justification whatsoever for believing that there is another world, a true nature of things, anything divine and absolute morality.

No doubt, Nigeria is a secular state, but there is disregard for other religions that exists in the country. Nevertheless, in the recent past, the government registered Nigeria into the Organization of Islamic States (O.I.C.). The government has been accused of religious favouritism. More aid were given to the Muslims for their trip to Mecca while their Christian counterparts receive less. Growing up, it wasn't unusual to see Christians and Muslims mingling together to celebrate Christmas and Sallah, but today wars and conflict reign supreme. Muslims leading to ethno - religious wars. No wonder Usman Dan Fodio opines that: “one of the swiftest ways of destroying a kingdom is to give preference to one particular tribe over another or to show favour to one group of people rather than another” (Ottakagu 27).

Recently, Nigeria has been battling with the problem of the full introduction of sharia law in most of the northern states. As a result, there is a manifestation of cracks and crevices in Nigeria. The strand that bonds the unity of the nation is beginning to snap. Hence, there is political disorder and insecurity, which threatens the stability, unity and security of the nation leading to anarchy, chaos and lawlessness. This has led to chronic and frequent agonies of religious hostilities, riots and violence of which the sharia induced riots in Zamfara, Kaduna, Kano states and Aba are buttressing examples.

From the Christian perspective, how is it that given the proliferation of churches in every tom, dick and harry, bribery and corruption, crime, and immorality are on the increase? In Nigeria, we record self-proclaimed pastors, evangelists, prophets, bishops, and archbishops. This is nothing short of religious nihilism. The situation has become untenable that Cardinal Okogie had to appeal to the government for assistance. He opined: "if the number of churches is not curbed, immediately, Nigeria would be in a bad state" (Osudibia 84).

On another note, if there is no unity among Christians, how can there be unity between Christians and Muslims? Regarding the fact that Muslims see themselves as superior to all and inferior to none. In Nigeria, every act of terrorism and violence is purportedly traceable to religion. Hence, the positive sense of religion has given way to a negative sense such that there is no more sense of the sacred, awe, human dignity, justice and fear of God. Consequently, there are constant religious crises, wars and violence between Christians and Muslims, amounting to killings in the name of God. Giving credence to this Karl Maier in his book, *This House has Fallen*, demonstrated how the deep ethnic and religious tensions since the independence have been the strains that are pulling the Nigerian state apart. The two dominant religions in Nigeria – Islam and Christianity are at daggers drawn. It is alleged that Muslims have an insatiable appetite for the blood of Christians. At the least provocation, they are set to pounce on the innocent Christians who are ever ready to turn the other cheek.

Nigeria is in a state of religious stupor, fracas and nihilism. Evidence of these abounds. It is on record that Kano, Kaduna, Bauchi, Kastina, and Borno states have left remarkable imprints of bloody religious conflict in the annals of the history of Nigeria. The gruesome attack on Christians by Muslims in Kaduna, which later spread over to Kano in 2000 is unforgettable. There was a counterattack at Aba and Umuahia in Abia state. This witnessed the heartless murder of infants, men, women; even pregnant women. In some cases, people were cremated in a house. Unforgettable is the barbaric beheading of Mr Gideon Akaluka and the triumphant parade of his bodiless head around the streets of Kano by Muslims over an alleged insult to the Koran. This is barbarism and nothing short of nihilism. Condemning the nihilistic act, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria remarked:

In this connection, we condemn vehemently the recent barbaric beheading in Kano of Mr. Gideon Akaluka for an alleged insult to Islam. This event has heightened the atmosphere of religious intolerance in our Nigerian society. We call on the government of the day to make a pronouncement on this outrageous crime and bring the perpetrators to book (Osudibia 120).

On another note, religion has become a platform used by politicians to instigate violence as a cover-up for their inefficiency and commoners pay with their blood. Thus, Osudibia opines:

Politicians find it much easier to raise a tribal war cry instead of strong discipline and strict accountability, which a well-articulated ideology imposes both on the leader and the led. When assaulted or confronted by superior ideas, politicians find tribal (religious) scapegoating a useful way of easing tension (119).

Moreover, the word religion has its origin in the Latin word 'Religare' which means, 'to bind'. The fallen man makes effort to bind himself once more to his creator. It is unimaginable that the same man who kills indiscriminately is at the same time binding himself to God who is holy, pure and unstained.

Among others, education is one of the major problems in Nigeria. Nigeria's educational sector is rotten. Qualitative and meaningful education is absent. Thus, this leads to nihilism in Nigeria because education widens the scope of understanding and meaningful and peaceful co-existence among people. Problems that require rational examination are reduced to gullibility leading to violence. There are two schools of thought regarding the meaning of education. As one takes education as a means of imbibing the norms and values of society to create an ideal adult, the other emphasises the utilitarian aspect of education. However, no single aspect of education should be stressed to the detriment of the other. Validating this, Daniel Wester affirms, that "education should comprise the inculcation of pure morality, true and worthy motives, feelings should also be disciplined, passion be restrained in all circumstances, knowledge should not only constitute all which is contained in the large term of education" (Anaetoh 42).

Nigerian education seems to be "certificate education". A Nigerian in the bid to acquire a certificate, can do virtually anything ranging from immorality, examination malpractice, and cultism to forging certificates to get it. This is an intellectual miscarriage. The government, leaders, and school management among others should lead us out of educational nihilism rather than promoting the act. Education has not received meaningful attention from the government. There is underfunding and a lack of educational facilities nationwide. For instance, in November 2018, due to the federal government's inability to fulfil the agreement made with the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) in 2015 went on strike which lasted for about three months among other recent Nigeria university strikes.

Nonetheless, one of the worst things that have happened to Nigeria is a clear separation of morality from education. The results of deliberate abandonment of morality in places of education are not far-fetched. Immorality became the order of the day. There are



contradictions of various forms. An undergraduate might gain admission to the university without clearing his/ her O'Level result thereby leaving behind the main criteria which are meant to be followed. The student's brightness is only on paper having made a good result courtesy of examination malpractice and sorting. Female students in addition to their certificates also parade another decree of sexual immorality. Members of the secret cult while graduating are morally depraved. The worst part of educational nihilism is that those who possess good degrees have no matching practical knowledge to back it up because "good results are now on sale like every other commodity" (Anaetoh 6).

In Nigeria, examination malpractice is a normal phenomenon. This malaise is perpetuated by some teachers/lecturers and the pupils/students and so it has become a prevalent problem-eating deep into our intellectual mindset. Malpractices occur before, during, and after examinations at all levels. Appraising this J. Anaetoh in his book *Campus Life* maintained that "the fact is that in any examination, the general conduct of most candidates sitting for any examination, malpractice has been institutionalized" (9). The consequences of this have been felt today in our society as it has been interpreted into the social frame. Hence, many occupants of public offices pass through this examination malpractice and thus they lack the technical know-how and genuine educational training. This is the reason why Nigerians are busy achieving nothing.

Besides, cultism has spread from universities to secondary schools in Nigeria. Media reports show that some of the primary schools in the country have also become entangled in them. Their activities are mainly characterized by the destruction of lives and properties. Confirming this, Odey in his book, *This Madness Called Election* opined that "cultism in our educational institution has become null and void as members have virtually taken over the institutions and turned them into death camps" (32). What assault on education? More so, in its editorial, Punch Metro Plus reports:

There was pandemonium in Ekpoma town, in the Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State, when no fewer than five persons, said to be students of the Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, were reportedly killed by suspected cult members (Cultists n.pag).

Hence, an education system that should be the hallmark of values and meaning has turned out to be meaningless in Nigerian society.

Economic nihilism includes poverty, embezzlement, corruption and insensitivity to the plight of the masses. The greatest disease in Nigeria is abject poverty, not HIV/AIDS or Leprosy. The cradle of economic nihilism is corruption, this is because the leaders are corrupt and the adverse effect of this reflects on the bad condition of the economy. The Self-centeredness of the leaders remains a characteristic of the nation's economic

nihilism. Using official stationery such as envelopes, and papers among others for private purposes has become the order of the day in Nigeria. A lot of government functionaries use office stationery for their private correspondence and selfish aggrandizement. Embezzlement displays itself in the falsification of figures, abandonment of the project and kick-backs in contracts. The abandonment of Onitsha seaport and Maiduguri Sheraton hotel are good examples among others. Even, though associations are set up to help fight corruption has failed on achieving their set goal. Buttressing this, Osudibia in his book *Revolution* opines that the “anti-corruption program has become a huge fake, the fund meant for poverty alleviation has succeeded only in putting the additional menu on the table of some insatiable local politicians” (63). In addition, egocentrism is one of the deadly diseases that have contributed to the nation’s economic nihilism. In ordinary parlance, love of one’s nation ought to supersede self-love. However, in Nigeria, it is self-interest before the common good. What else could amount to economic nihilism when “in some states of the federation civil servants were owed salary arrears up to eight and nine months”? The question that remains to be asked is, where do all those monies go?

Callousness of the government to the plight of the masses, there is a high rate of unemployment and abject poverty in the country. This can also be seen when our leaders and government officials take our wealth and resources to another country thereby creating employment for the citizens of that country. Basic human needs are not provided. The less privileged are not only neglected but are also insulted. The masses are deprived of security, battered by hunger, and deficient health services are the order of the day in our society, yet the government remained insensitive to these. Is this kind of nihilism in Nigeria not economic nihilism?

Political nihilism is associated with the belief that the destruction of all existing socio-political order is a prerequisite for future improvement. At the core of political nihilism is corruption. As a result of the high level of corruption, an average Nigerian is seen as a dubious character that must be kept in close check” (Weekly Insider 3). Nigeria and in particular her leaders are corrupt. The foggy state of affairs of the political scene in Nigeria has become a topic of discussion whether in public or private. The question of the problem of Nigeria becomes a recurring question. Thus, Chinua Achebe came up with an answer that the genesis of this trouble is “bad leadership, corruption and inequality” (Okoli 5). There has not been an insightful good leader in Nigeria since she got her independence, rather she has experienced a series of military dictators and the present military dictator in a civilian cloak. The meaning and value of Nigerian politics have been baffled. Politics in the right sense of the word is an organization of men to co-exist in peace and harmony, and the management and distribution of material resources for the common good. Amplifying this, the philosopher Aristotle opined:

The end of politics is good for man. For even if the good is the same for the individual and the state, the good of the state is the greater and perfect thing to attain and safeguard. The attainment of the good for one man alone is to be sure, a source of satisfaction: yet to secure it for a nation and state is nobler and more divine (Osudibia 119).

Reversely, politics has been misinterpreted. It is now seen as a situation where maximization of gain is the main purpose of going into it. Government is seen as an investment where personal needs and exalt substitute for the common good leading to a profound poor standard of living, poor infrastructure and social amenities. Political power is the right to "aristocracy", where our leaders and politicians make empty promises to gain the support of the populace. Politicians seize every available opportunity to embezzle public funds through the inflation of contracts, fictitious travelling claims and allowance and other devious means. They are looking for money to fight for the next election. In the Nigerian political scene nonentities are turned into leaders, nihilists are made VIPS and thugs become an adviser. Nigerian style of politics is power politics where ambitious politicians perceive it as a do-or-die affair and a platform where the snake eats snake. It is a dirty game in which the winner takes it all. The foregoing highlights that there is no fear of God and how can there be since he is dead. This is a confirmation that Nietzsche's master morality and superman have been directly and undilutedly translated into the Nigerian political arena. His prophetic insight into European nihilism is the wrath of Nigerian politics today as evidenced in the brutality and ruthlessness that had characterized the nation. Hence, Nietzsche opines:

There is, however, one thing that does characterize all human beings, and that is the drive to dominate the environment. This drive, so central to human nature is the will to power. This will to power is more than simply the will to survive. Is an inner drive to express a vigorous affirmation of all of a person's powers.... The strongest and the highest will to life does not find expression in a miserable struggle for existence, but in a will to war, a will to power, and a will to overpower (Stumpf 425).

Assassination is also associated with political nihilism in Nigeria. People want political power by all means and at any cost. Usurpation of power has led to political egocentrism and the elimination of rivals, which creates a bloodstained in the political arena. This can be proved by the number of coups and counter-coups since the independence of Nigeria. No meaningful politics can be practised without constructive criticism from the opposition party. Conversely, this is different in Nigeria where those in power crush their critics. Our leaders are mindless cabals who have no value for human life and dignity.

This political annihilation of political opponents locates its expression in constant assassination and mysterious deaths of prominent politicians and some of our best brains of which such people as Dele Giwa, SaroWiwa, Bola Ige, Mr/s. B. Igwe, Dikibo, KudiratAbiola, Harry Marshal, and Okadigbo among others are good examples. Since violence begets violence, the power assumed by violence must be sustained by violence. This is Machiavellianism in practice in Nigeria. Hence, in the words of Obasanjo:

Nigerians live to gratify their craze for position, power, possession, plaudit, popularity and pleasure at any cost. A Nigerian in pursuance of any or all of these idiosyncrasies would buy his way through and buy himself into anything at the price of law and order (Maier 267).

Another issue that has in no small measure contributed to political nihilism in Nigeria is election malpractice. Free and fair election is a sine qua non for any democratic setup. Nevertheless, she has been far from conducting a free and fair election. Democracy in Nigeria is a rape of democracy. At best, it is described as organized confusion. Buhari, the angel sent from above to rescue Nigeria from her political nihilism could not accomplish that. His political style is questionable as he enjoys politics of enmity and vendetta. His practice of justice in the area of bribery and corruption has been termed selective justice. The election that brought him into power is alleged to have been massively rigged. Lies are fed to the masses with alacrity. In light of this, E. Obiora opines, “in the face of massive election rigging, it is declared free and fair. One major vice of this country is willful insincerity and hypocrisy. You see public lies being fed to the populace on daily basis” (Thinkers 37).

The police are another institution that is still operative because there is no alternative yet. They are the embodiment of institutionalized bribery and corruption. Elaborating on this Karl Maier opines: “every few miles or so another group of armed men had set up operations on the road, demanding bribes from the people they were employed to protect” (Osudibia 57). No doubt, the police are under the control of the government. If the police are corrupt and unable to maintain law and order in society, then society is doomed to fail. However, the crux of the matter is that the police and the army are mere instruments in the hands of our corrupt leaders who use them to intimidate the masses. This is geared towards demoralization and intimidation, traumatization, infuriation, defamation and dishonouring of the citizens. This is absolutely against their motto ‘protect and serve with integrity’. Presenting the range of the unlawful activities of the police, Osudibia said:

The police had become together with the army an occupation troop in our cities and highways. If anyone wanted to witness man’s inhumanity to man, he should have come to Nigeria and seen the police and the army at work. The horsehip ..., which is a veritable instrument of savage brutality, had become an

indispensable gadget attached to the military and police outfit in Nigeria. The army and the law enforcement agents had become modern-day slave drivers who have been given 'carte blanche' by their uniform to do whatever they wished to the civilian populace and no one dared to raise an eyebrow (41).

On another note, ethnicism had raised the dust of nihilism in the political arena. While some are born to rule, others are born to serve. This mentality has done more harm than good in the Nigerian polity. The situation displays terrible threats of internal disintegration. The cries of marginalization and inequality by various segments of society posit that there is something fundamentally wrong with the power equation in Nigeria. There is excessive marginalization such that "Nigerians have begun to doubt their Nigerianess" (Weekly Insider 21). The net effect is the resurgence of ethnic armies that arose to protect the interest of their people and to canvas for secession. This has consumed the desire for national unity as the country is often thrown into a theatre of war laden with lust for ethnic cleansing of the "Hitlerist" model. Such ethnic armies are the Odua People's Congress (O.P.C.), Arewa People's Forum (A.P.F.), The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (M.A.S.S.O.B.), Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (M.O.S.O.P), Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) Etc.

In Niger Delta, the total neglect of the economic base of the nation is the cause of constant fracas and unrest in the area as well as constant kidnapping and abduction of foreign oil workers. The formations of The Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (N.D.P.V.F.), The Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (M.E.N.D.), Niger Delta Allegers etc. are a dangerous signal that all is not well. How can all be well when the area that supplies the country with oil has relatively little to show for it? Rather they pay with their blood. Thus, this is the origin of political nihilism in Nigeria.

This work is of the view that Education banishes ignorance, it frees the individual from the prejudices and irrational assumptions of everyday life and enlarges their experience. In regards to the contemporary Nigerian society, what Nigerian society needs as an important starting point is a relevant dynamic educational philosophy and certain teaching which ultimately should give new life and value system. A serious re-orientation exercise of the general public should be carried out, with all sincerity of purpose to dis-abuse the minds of the general populace against the perception that what is required is success and that any means to acquire it is not important.

The Awolowo's mental magnitude which gives credence to character formation and includes courage, strength, and integrity should be taught to both those in-seat leaders, incoming leaders and the citizens at large. Everyone has an inner voice that urges them to accomplish something great and to chase after their dream. Located in everyone is a seed

of unrealized potential and one's purpose in life should be that such potential be actualized.

The emphases are important because if the purpose of life is defined as the fulfilment of individual material needs, the resulting value set will be very different from one that sets higher humanistic goals or that denies the real purpose of life as the acquisition of spiritual qualities. Nigerians must be taught to learn that "moral maketh a man" (Thorsen 13). The peace of the soul or happiness does not depend on external goods, wealth, riches and like alone, but on the wealth of the soul. Thus, for this to work, there is the need to not only overhaul Awolowo's mental magnitude but also entrench moral education as a continuous process running from the corridors of home to the universe of private and public organization in instilling and spreading the moral virtues and values on greater percentages of the Nigerian population.

Leaders in office should in subsequent times be reminded of their purpose in office. They should intervals be subjected to a form of training that would serve as an avenue to teach and remind them that their reason in that office is to serve humanity. And in doing this, the leader will always have it at the back of their mind to checkmate their actions to know and see whether it tallies with the accepted values and norms of the society.

## Conclusion

The crises of nihilism in Nigeria suggest that the growth and progress in the society are being retarded in many aspects through the materialistic outburst of her leaders and citizens. It is beyond doubt that materialism has taken over the government, political institutions, and economic, educational and religious sectors in Nigeria. This is a result of a lack of objective truth and a loss of moral worth of our values, ideas, and beliefs. But we can set things right by the revaluation of Nigeria's moral system, especially through the mental pedagogy of the citizens. Once we do this, we shall live together as a peaceful and nihilism-free country, where people will be treated as an end in themselves and the common good realized.

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